



## Hitler Answers Roosevelt

### The German Leader's Reply to the American President's Public Challenge

#### Foreword

Of the many speeches made by Adolf Hitler during his lifetime, certainly one of the most important was his address of April 28, 1939. It was also very probably the most eagerly anticipated and closely followed speech of the time, with many millions of people around the world listening to it live on radio or reading of it the next day in newspapers.

American journalist and historian William L. Shirer, a harsh critic of the Third Reich who was reporting from Europe for CBS radio at the time, later described this Hitler speech as “probably the most brilliant oration he ever gave, certainly the greatest this writer ever heard from him.” The address is also important as a detailed, well-organized presentation of the German leader's view of his country's place in the world, and as a lucid review of his government's foreign policy objectives and achievements during the first six years of his administration.

The speech was a response to a much-publicized message to Hitler – with a similar one to Italian leader Benito Mussolini – issued two weeks earlier by President Franklin Roosevelt. In it, the American leader issued a provocative challenge, calling on Hitler to promise that he would not attack 31 countries, which he named.

Made public on the evening of April 14, the president's message was given wide attention in newspapers around the globe. Roosevelt and his inner circle anticipated that the American public would be pleased with his seeming concern for world peace, and expected that this much-publicized challenge would embarrass the German leader. Harold Ickes, a high-level official in the Roosevelt administration, praised the president's message as “a brilliant move” that “has put both Hitler and Mussolini in a hole.”



Franklin Roosevelt

Along with many other newspapers across the country, the daily *Evening Star* of Washington, DC, praised Roosevelt's initiative, declaring in an editorial that “the overwhelming majority” of “Americans rejoice in their President's constructive move for peace.” But not everyone was so impressed. Many regarded the message as arrogant and potentially dangerous meddling in foreign issues that did not involve any vital American interest, and which Roosevelt did not adequately understand. As US historian Robert Dallek has observed, the message strengthened the concerns of those who believed that the President was seeking to deflect attention from persistent problems at home by meddling abroad.

The influential Protestant journal, *Christian Century*, remarked that, in issuing his challenge, President Roosevelt “had taken his stand before the axis dictators like some frontier sheriff at the head of a posse.” An important Roman Catholic journal, *Commonweal*, regarded the message as one-sided, noting that it had ignored “the wrongs committed by post-war England and France, what they had contributed to the impoverishment of the Axis powers ...” British historian Leonard Mosley later characterized it as “ham-handed,” while German historian Joachim Fest called the message a piece of “naïve demagoguery.”



Adolf Hitler

Because Roosevelt's challenge had generated such broad international attention, the announcement a few days later that the German leader would respond to it in an address to a specially summoned session of the Reichstag in Berlin understandably increased interest in Hitler's reply. Especially in the US and Europe, many people keenly anticipated the “second round” in this duel of words between two major world leaders.

Dramatic recent developments in Europe and growing fear of a war involving the major European powers naturally heightened interest in what Hitler would say. Some months earlier, the ethnically German “Sudetenland” region of Czechoslovakia had been incorporated into the German Reich – which now also included Austria – in accord with the Munich Agreement of the “Four Power” leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Then, just a few weeks before Roosevelt sent his message to Hitler, Germany had surprised the world by suddenly taking control of the Czech lands, adding them to the Reich as the “Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia.” Especially in the US, influential newspapers, magazines and radio commentators portrayed Hitler’s takeover of Prague as an act of brazen aggression, one that proved that the German leader was so untrustworthy and insatiable that he must be regarded as a grave threat to peace and security. The German government’s recent demand that Poland permit Danzig to return to the Reich was widely cited as further evidence that Hitler threatened world peace.

Under these circumstances, Hitler naturally devoted considerable attention in his address to those topical issues and fears. But while it was meant for a global audience and readership, the German leader directed his speech above all to his own people.

Unlike Franklin Roosevelt, Hitler did not rely on speechwriters. The words he spoke were his own. To be sure, in preparing this address and similarly detailed speeches, he turned to various government officials and agencies for the statistics and other specific data he intended to cite. However, the ideas, arguments, turns of phrase, tone and structure of this address were entirely Hitler’s. In preparing the text of an important address, he would typically dictate a first draft to one or more secretaries, and then make revisions and changes until a satisfactory final text was produced – a process that could require considerable time and attention.

Broadcast on radio stations around the world, Hitler’s two-hour Reichstag address of Friday afternoon, April 28, was heard by millions of listeners. In the US, all three major radio networks broadcast it live, with running English-language translation. The next day, Hitler’s speech was the leading news item on the front page of every major American daily newspaper, and many published lengthy excerpts from it. “Interest in the speech surpasses anything so far known,” the German embassy in Washington reported to Berlin.

Astute observers realized that Roosevelt had greatly underestimated the shrewdness and rhetorical skill of the German leader. “Hitler had all the better of the argument,” remarked US Senator Hiram Johnson of California, a prominent “progressive” lawmaker. “Roosevelt put his chin out and got a resounding whack.” US Senator Gerald Nye commented simply, “He asked for it.”

James MacGregor Burns, a prominent American historian and an ardent admirer of Franklin Roosevelt, later wrote of the exchange: “While neither the President nor [US Secretary of State] Hull had been optimistic about the outcome, in his first widely publicized encounter with Hitler, Roosevelt had come off a clear second best.” John Toland, another well-regarded US historian, called Hitler’s response “a remarkable display of mental gymnastics.” The German leader “took up the President’s message point by point, demolishing each like a schoolmaster.”

In his carefully prepared address, the German leader largely succeeded in portraying the American president’s initiative as a pretentious and impertinent maneuver – one that, moreover, demonstrated a simplistic and superficial view of geopolitical realities, a skewed sense of justice, and a deficient understanding of history.

Although it was given prominent play in the US media, the attitude of the American press toward Hitler’s speech was generally dismissive and disparaging. Typical was the view of the *Evening Star* of Washington, DC. In an editorial, the influential daily denigrated the address as “crafty and cunning,” while New York City’s *Brooklyn Eagle* called it “rambling, confused.” Along with most US newspapers, the two dailies ignored the German leader’s plea for justice, equity and even-handedness, and the specifics of his detailed critique of Roosevelt’s message. Even more unfriendly than the attitude expressed in the editorial columns of the country’s newspapers was the snide, belittling and often viciously hostile portrayal of Hitler in editorial cartoons. By early 1939, most of the American media had adopted a scathing and belligerent attitude toward National Socialist Germany and its leader. Hitler was routinely portrayed as so malign and duplicitous that anything he said was simply not worthy of respectful or serious consideration.

This attitude was noted, for example, by the Polish ambassador in Washington, Jerzy Potocki. In a confidential dispatch of January 12, 1939, he reported to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw:

“The feeling now prevailing in the United States is marked by a growing hatred of fascism and, above all, of Chancellor Hitler and everything connected with Nazism. Propaganda is mostly in the hands of

the Jews who control almost 100 percent radio, film, daily and periodical press. Although this propaganda is extremely coarse and presents Germany as black as possible ... this propaganda is nevertheless extremely effective since the public here is completely ignorant and knows nothing of the situation in Europe. Right now, most Americans regard Chancellor Hitler and Nazism as the greatest evil and greatest danger threatening the world ... Besides this propaganda, a war psychosis is being artificially created. The American people are told that peace in Europe is hanging only by a thread and that war is unavoidable. At the same time the American people are unequivocally told that in case of a world war, America must also take an active part in order to defend the slogans of freedom and democracy in the world."

To most discerning observers, it was obvious that the American president's message was more a publicity stunt than a serious initiative for peace. For one thing, he addressed this appeal only to the leaders of Germany and Italy. He made no similar request to leaders in any other country. And given America's own record of military intervention in foreign countries, it's difficult to accept that Roosevelt himself actually believed his assertion that the only valid or justifiable reason why any country should go to war would be in "the cause of self-evident home defense." Over the years, US forces have attacked numerous countries that presented no clear or present danger to the US, or any threat to vital American interests.

Roosevelt's listing of countries that supposedly might be threatened by Germany is all the more remarkable given how events unfolded over the next few years. Finland, the first country on the President's list, was in fact attacked seven months later – not by Germany, but rather by the Soviet Union. During World War II, Finland was an ally of Hitler's Germany, while the Soviet Union was an important military partner of the US. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were the next countries on the President's list. These three Baltic nations were subjugated by force in 1940 – not by German troops, but by the Red Army. Later during World War II, President Roosevelt accepted Stalin's brutal incorporation of those three countries into the USSR.

Poland was also on the President's list. But when Soviet troops attacked Poland from the East in September 1939, neither Britain, France nor the US did anything to counter the aggression. After Soviet forces took control of all of Poland in 1944-1945, the US accepted the Soviet subjugation of the country.

Britain and France were naturally also on Roosevelt's list. But just a few months after his message to Hitler, those two countries went to war against Germany – with the leaders in London and Paris citing the German attack against Poland as their reason for the move. At least two countries on Roosevelt's list – Syria and Palestine – were hardly in danger of attack by Germany, especially given that, as Hitler pointed out, they were already under military subjugation by "democratic" countries.

The President's mention of Palestine in his message prompted a particularly sharp rejoinder by Hitler about British oppression of that country. Palestinians were enraged not only by Britain's uninvited rule, he noted, but also by the support given by British leaders to the Jewish "interlopers" who were trying to impose Zionist control in their country. Roosevelt either knew nothing about the actual status of Palestine, or his supposed concern for its freedom was a sham. He was, of course, hardly the only American politician to support Zionist subjugation of Palestine while at the same time proclaiming his love of freedom and democracy.

Iran, the final country listed in the President's message, was later invaded – but not by Germany. When British and Soviet forces attacked and occupied that neutral country in August 1941, President Roosevelt not only rejected a plea for help from Iran's government, he justified and supported the brutal takeover of that country.

The cause of world peace, Roosevelt said in his message to Hitler, would be "greatly advanced" if world leaders were to provide "a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of governments." This was sheer hypocrisy. During this period – months before the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 – the President was himself covertly pressing for conflict against Germany.

At a secret meeting seven months earlier, he had told the British ambassador, Ronald Lindsay, that if Britain and France "would find themselves forced to war" against Germany, the United States would ultimately also join. Roosevelt went on to explain during their White House meeting on September 19, 1938, that it would require some clever maneuvering to make good on this pledge. The President went on to urge the envoy to persuade his government in London to impose an economic embargo against Germany with the hope and expectation that the German leadership would respond by openly going to war against Britain, which would then enable the US to join the anticipated war against Germany with a minimum of protest from the American public.

In November 1938, the Polish ambassador to Washington reported to Warsaw that William Bullitt, a high-level US diplomat and a particularly trusted colleague of President Roosevelt, had assured him that the US would “undoubtedly” enter a war against Germany, “but only after Great Britain and France had made the first move.” In January 1939, Polish ambassador Potocki reported on another confidential conversation with Bullitt, who assured him that the United States would be prepared “to intervene actively on the side of Britain and France in case of war” against Germany. Bullitt went on to confide that the US was ready to “place its whole wealth of money and raw materials at their disposal.”

A few weeks later, the Polish ambassador in Paris, Jules Lukasiewicz, confidentially informed Warsaw of a talk with William Bullitt, the US ambassador to France. The American envoy had assured him that if hostilities should break out, one could “foresee right from the beginning the participation of the United States in the war on the side of France and Britain.”

These pledges were kept secret because the President and his close advisors knew that American public opinion strongly opposed US involvement in another war in Europe. In that more trusting era, Americans believed their president to be sincere in his public assurances of the government’s peaceful intentions, and trusted his promise to keep their country out of any war that might break out in Europe.

The historic April 1939 exchange between Roosevelt and Hitler is important in helping to better understand the foreign policy outlook and goals of those two influential twentieth-century leaders, and how very differently each viewed recent history and his own country’s role in the world.

Their exchange was highlighted in the US government’s widely-viewed World War II “Why We Fight” film series. It showed Hitler reading the list of countries that allegedly were threatened with attack or invasion by Germany, to which the Reichstag audience responded – at first with silence and then with laughter. The narrator told viewers that Hitler treated the President’s public challenge as a “huge joke.” In fact, the audience laughed because they quite understandably regarded as ludicrous the notion that German forces might attack or invade such countries as Spain, Ireland, Syria or Iran.

Far from regarding it as a “huge joke,” Hitler made an effort to respond to every point of the President’s telegram. Roosevelt, for his part, declined to reply to Hitler’s detailed address, much less respond to the German leader’s specific points. Roosevelt ignored even Hitler’s appeal to the US government to fulfill the solemn pledges it had made twenty years earlier to Germany and the world.

In the months that followed, American policy toward Germany became increasingly hostile. In 1940 and 1941 the President sought ever more openly to persuade the skeptical American public to support Britain and Soviet Russia in war against Germany. The worsening US-German relations culminated in Hitler’s Reichstag address of December 11, 1941 – four days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the mutual declarations of war of those two countries – in which he reviewed the record of America’s increasingly overt acts of aggression against Germany. After stating that his patience with US belligerency and lawlessness had finally reached an end, Hitler announced that his nation was now joining Japan in war against the United States.

Here below is the full text of President Roosevelt’s April 1939 message to Hitler, followed by a specially prepared translation of the complete text of the Reichstag address by the German leader in response. Endnotes have been added to provide context and to help to clarify unfamiliar references. A list of items for suggested further reading is also provided.

-- Mark Weber, October 2020

## President Roosevelt’s Message

*The following is the text of the message sent by President Roosevelt to Chancellor Adolf Hitler on April 14, 1939*

You realize, I am sure, that throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars.

The existence of this fear — and the possibility of such a conflict—are of definite concern to the people of the United States for whom I speak, as they must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the

entire Western Hemisphere. All of them know that any major war, even if it were to be confined to other continents, must bear heavily on them during its continuance and also for generations to come.

Because of the fact that after the acute tension in which the world has been living during the past few weeks there would seem to be at least a momentary relaxation — because no troops are at this moment on the march — this may be an opportune moment for me to send you this message.

On a previous occasion I have addressed you in behalf of the settlement of political, economic, and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to arms.

But the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin. All the world, victor nations, vanquished nations, and neutral nations, will suffer.

I refuse to believe that the world is, of necessity, such a prisoner of destiny. On the contrary, it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended.

It is, however, unfortunately necessary to take cognizance of recent facts.

Three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated. A vast territory in another independent Nation of the Far East has been occupied by a neighboring State. Reports, which we trust are not true, insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations. Plainly the world is moving toward the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found.

You have repeatedly asserted that you and the German people have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war.

Nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the cause of self-evident home defense.

In making this statement we as Americans speak not through selfishness or fear or weakness. If we speak now it is with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind. It is still clear to me that international problems can be solved at the council table.

It is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussion for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs, they will not lay aside their arms. In conference rooms, as in courts, it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith, assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both; and it is customary and necessary that they leave their arms outside the room where they confer.

I am convinced that the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of governments.

Because the United States, as one of the Nations of the Western Hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe, I trust that you may be willing to make such a statement of policy to me as head of a Nation far removed from Europe in order that I, acting only with the responsibility and obligation of a friendly intermediary, may communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your government may take.

Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iran.

Such an assurance clearly must apply not only to the present day but also to a future sufficiently long to give every opportunity to work by peaceful methods for a more permanent peace. I therefore suggest that you construe the word “future” to apply to a minimum period of assured non-aggression — ten years at the least, a quarter of a century, if we dare look that far ahead.



If such assurance is given by your government, I shall immediately transmit it to the governments of the nations I have named and I shall simultaneously inquire whether, as I am reasonably sure, each of the nations enumerated will in turn give like assurance for transmission to you.

Reciprocal assurances such as I have outlined will bring to the world an immediate measure of relief.

I propose that if it is given, two essential problems shall promptly be discussed in the resulting peaceful surroundings, and in those discussions the government of the United States will gladly take part.

The discussions which I have in mind relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament which is each day bringing them more closely to the brink of economic disaster.

Simultaneously the government of the United States would be prepared to take part in discussions looking toward the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every Nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life.

At the same time, those governments other than the United States which are directly interested could undertake such political discussions as they may consider necessary or desirable.

We recognize complex world problems which affect all humanity but we know that study and discussion of them must be held in an atmosphere of peace. Such an atmosphere of peace cannot exist if negotiations are overshadowed by the threat of force or by the fear of war.

I think you will not misunderstand the spirit of frankness in which I send you this message. Heads of great governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war. History will hold them accountable for the lives and the happiness of all – even unto the least.

I hope that your answer will make it possible for humanity to lose fear and regain security for many years to come.

A similar message is being addressed to the Chief of the Italian government.

## Chancellor Hitler's Speech

*The following is the text of the address delivered by Chancellor Hitler on April 28, 1939, at a specially summoned session of the German Reichstag.*

Members of the German Reichstag!

The President of the United States of America has addressed a telegram to me, the curious contents of which you are already familiar. Before I, the addressee, actually received this document, the rest of the world had already been informed of it by radio and newspaper reports. Numerous commentaries in the organs of the democratic world press had already happily enlightened us as to the fact that this telegram was a tactically clever document, designed to impose upon the states, in which the people govern, the responsibility for the warlike measures adopted by the plutocratic countries.

Therefore I decided to summon the German Reichstag so that you, as Reichstag deputies, would have the opportunity to be the first to hear my answer, and of either confirming or rejecting it. In addition, I also considered it appropriate to act in accord with the method of procedure chosen by President Roosevelt and, for my part, to inform the rest of the world of my answer in our own way. I also wish to use this occasion to give expression to the feelings with which the tremendous historical happenings of the month of March inspire me. I can express my deepest feelings only in the form of humble thanks to Providence which called upon me, and permitted me, once an unknown soldier of the [world] war [of 1914-1918], to rise to be the Leader of my people, so dear to me.

Providence showed me the way to free our people from the depths of its misery without bloodshed and to lead it upward once again. Providence granted that I might fulfill my life's task to raise my

German people from of the depths of defeat and to liberate it from the bonds of the most outrageous dictate of all times. That alone has been the goal of my efforts.

Since the day on which I entered political life, I have lived for no other idea than that of winning back the freedom of the German nation, restoring the power and strength of the Reich, overcoming the internal discord of our people, repairing its isolation from the rest of the world, and safeguarding the maintenance of its independent economic and political life.

I have intended only to restore that which others once broke by force. I have desired only to make good that which satanic malice or human stupidity destroyed or ruined. I have, therefore, taken no step that violated the rights of others, but have only restored the right that was violated twenty years ago.

The Greater German Reich today contains no territory that was not from the earliest times a part of this Reich, bound up with it, or subject to its sovereignty. Long before an American continent had been discovered – not to say settled – by white people, this Reich existed, not merely with its present extent, but with many additional regions and provinces that have since been lost.

Twenty-one years ago, when the bloodshed of the [First World] war came to an end, millions of minds were filled with the ardent hope that a peace of reason and justice would reward and bless the nations that were hostages of the fearful scourge of the [First] World War. I say “reward,” for all those men and women – whatever the conclusions arrived at by historians – bore no responsibility for these fearful happenings. In some countries there may still be politicians who even at that time might be considered responsible for that most horrible slaughter of all times, but the great mass of fighting soldiers of every country and nation were by no means guilty, but rather deserving of pity.



*Hitler is saluted at this special session of the German Reichstag on April 28, 1939. On this occasion, the Chancellor delivered a widely anticipated address in response to a much-publicized challenge by American president Franklin Roosevelt. Millions around the world listened on radio to Hitler's two hour speech as he delivered it. In the US, all three major radio networks broadcast it live, with running English-language translation. The next day, it was the leading news item on the front page of every major American daily newspaper.*

As you know, I myself had never played a part in politics before the war. Like millions of others, I only carried out such duties as I was called upon to fulfill as a decent citizen and soldier. It was therefore with an absolutely clear conscience that I was able to take up the cause of the freedom and future of my people, both during and after the war. And I can therefore speak in the name of millions and

millions of others who are equally blameless when I declare that all those, who had only fought for their nation in loyal fulfillment of their duty, were entitled to a peace of reason and justice, so that humanity might at last set to work to make good by joint effort the losses which all had suffered.

But those millions were cheated of that peace; for not only did the German people, and the other peoples fighting on our side suffer through the peace treaties, but these treaties had a destructive impact on the victors as well.

That politics should be controlled by men who had not themselves fought in the war was recognized for the first time as a misfortune. Hatred was unknown to the soldiers, but not to those elderly politicians who had carefully preserved their own precious lives from the horrors of war, and who now descended upon humanity in the guise of insane spirits of revenge.

Hatred, malice and unreason were the intellectual forebears of the dictated Treaty of Versailles. / 1 Territories and states with a history going back a thousand years were arbitrarily broken up and dissolved. People who have belonged together since time immemorial were torn asunder; economic conditions of life were ignored, while the peoples themselves were dealt with as victors and vanquished, as masters possessing all rights or as slaves possessing none.

That document of Versailles has fortunately been set down in black and white for generations to come, for otherwise it would have been regarded in the future as the grotesque product of a wild and corrupt imagination. Nearly 115 million people were robbed of their right of self-determination, not by victorious soldiers, but by mad politicians, and were arbitrarily removed from ancient communities and made part of new ones without any consideration of blood, ancestry, common sense, or the economic conditions of life.

The results were appalling. Though at that time the statesmen were able to destroy a great many things, there was one factor which could not be eliminated; the gigantic mass of people living in Central Europe, crowded together in a confined area, can only secure their daily bread by the maximum of labor and resultant order.

But what did these statesmen of the so-called democratic empires know of these problems? A flock of utterly stupid and ignorant people was let loose on humanity. In areas in which about 140 people per square kilometer have to gain a livelihood, they simply destroyed the order that had been built up over nearly two thousand years of historical development, and created disorder, without themselves being capable or desirous of solving the problems confronting the communal life of these people – for which, moreover, as dictators of the new world order, they had at that time assumed responsibility.

However, when this new world order turned out to be a catastrophe, the democratic peace dictators, both American and European, were so cowardly that none of them ventured to take the responsibility for what occurred. Each put the blame on the others, thus endeavoring to save himself from the judgment of history. However, the people who were mistreated by their hatred and lack of reason were, unfortunately, not in a position to join them in that exit.

It is impossible to enumerate the stages of our own people's sufferings. Robbed of the whole of its colonial possessions, / 2 deprived of all its financial resources, plundered by so-called reparations, and thus impoverished, our nation was driven into the darkest period of its national misfortune. And it should be noted that this was not National Socialist Germany, but democratic Germany / 3 – the Germany which was weak enough to trust even for a single moment the promises of democratic statesmen.

The resulting misery and continuing impoverishment began to bring our nation to political despair. Even decent and industrious people of Central Europe looked to the possibility of deliverance in the complete destruction of the old order, which to them represented a curse.

Jewish parasites, on the one hand, plundered the nation ruthlessly and, on the other hand, incited the people, reduced as it was to misery. As the misfortune of our nation became the aim and object of that race, it was possible to breed among the growing army of unemployed suitable elements for the Bolshevik revolution.

The decay of political order and the confusion of public opinion by an irresponsible Jewish press led to ever stronger shocks to economic life, and consequently to increasing misery and to greater readiness to accept subversive Bolshevik ideas. The army of the Jewish world revolution, as the army of unemployed was called, finally rose to almost seven million.



Germany had never before known such conditions. In the area in which this great people and the old Habsburg states belonging to it lived, economic life, despite all the difficulties of the struggle for existence involved by the excessive density of population, had not become more uncertain in the course of time but, on the contrary, more and more secure.

Industriousness and diligence, great thrift, and a love of scrupulous order, though they did not enable the people in this territory to accumulate excessive riches, did at any rate insure them against abject misery. The results of the wretched peace forced upon them by the democratic dictators were thus all the more terrible for these people, who were condemned at Versailles. Today we know the reason for this frightful outcome of the [First] World War.

Primarily, it was the greed for spoils. That which seldom pays in private life, could, they believed, when enlarged a million-fold, be represented to mankind as a profitable experiment. If large nations were plundered and the utmost squeezed out of them, it would then be possible to live a life of carefree idleness. Such was the opinion of these economic dilettantes.

To that end, first of all, the states themselves had to be dismembered. Germany had to be deprived of her colonial possessions, although, they were without any value to the imperial democracies; the most important [German] regions of natural resources had to be invaded and – if necessary – placed under the influence of the democracies; and above all, the unfortunate victims of that democratic mistreatment of nations and people had to be prevented from ever recovering, let alone rising against their oppressors.

Thus was concocted the satanic plan to burden generations with the curse of those dictates. For 60, 70, or 100 years, Germany was to pay sums so exorbitant that the question of how they were actually to be raised must forever remain a mystery. To raise such sums in gold, in foreign currency, or by way of regular payments in kind, would have been absolutely impossible without the bedazzled collectors of this tribute being ruined as well.

As a matter of fact, these democratic peace dictators basically destroyed the world economy with their Versailles madness. / 4 Their senseless dismemberment of peoples and states led to the destruction of common production and trade interests which had become well established in the course of hundreds of years, thereby forcing the development of autarchic tendencies, and with it the destruction of the previous general conditions of the world economy.

Twenty years ago, when I signed my name in the book of political life as the seventh member of the then German Workers Party / 5 in Munich, I saw the impact of those signs of decay all around me. The worst of it – as I have already emphasized – was the utter despair of the masses that resulted therefrom, the disappearance among the educated classes of all confidence in human reason, let alone in a sense of justice, and a predominance of brutal selfishness among all such egotistically inclined creatures.

The extent to which, in the course of what is now twenty years, I have been able to mold a nation from such chaotic disorganization into an organic whole and to establish a new order, is already part of German history.

What I wish to make clear today, by way of introduction, is above all the goals of my political outlook and their realization with regard to foreign policy.

One of the most shameful acts of oppression ever committed is the dismemberment of the German nation and the political disintegration, provided for in the Dictate of Versailles, of the area in which it had, after all, lived for thousands of years.

I have never, my Reichstag deputies, left any doubt that in point of fact it is scarcely possible anywhere in Europe to arrive at an entirely satisfactory harmony of state and ethnic boundaries that would be satisfactory to everyone concerned. On the one hand, the migration of peoples that gradually came to a standstill during the last few centuries, and on the other, the development of large communities, have brought about a situation which, whatever way they look at it, will necessarily be considered unsatisfactory in in some way or other by those concerned. It was, however, precisely the way in which these ethnic-national and political developments were gradually stabilized in the last century that led many to cling to the hope that in the end a compromise would be found between respect for the national life of the various European peoples and the recognition of established political structures – a compromise by which, without destroying the political order in Europe and with it the existing economic basis, nationalities could nevertheless be preserved.

Those hopes were destroyed by the [First] World War. The peace dictate of Versailles did justice neither to the one principle nor to the other. Neither the right of self-determination was respected, nor was consideration given to the political, let alone the economic necessities and conditions, for European development. Nevertheless, I have never denied that – as I have already emphasized – there would have to be limits even to a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. And I have always said so with the utmost frankness – not for any tactical reasons, but from my innermost conviction. As the national leader of the German people, I have never left any doubt that, wherever the higher interests of the European community are at stake, specific national interests must, if necessary, be relegated to second place.

And – as I have already emphasized – this is not for tactical reasons, for I have never left any doubt that I am absolutely in earnest in this attitude. With regard to many territories that might possibly be disputed, I have, therefore, come to final decisions, which I have proclaimed not only to the outside world, but also to my own people, and I have seen to it that those decisions are respected.

I have not, as France did in 1870-1871, / 6 described the cession of Alsace-Lorraine as intolerable for the future. Instead, I here made a distinction between the Saar territory and these two former Reich provinces. And I have never changed my attitude, nor will I ever do so. I have not allowed this attitude to be modified or prejudiced inside the country on any occasion, either in the press or in any other way. The return of the Saar territory / 7 has done away with all territorial problems in Europe between France and Germany. I have, however, always regarded it as regrettable that French statesmen have taken that attitude for granted. That's not the way to look at the matter. It was not because of fear of France that I expressed this attitude. As a former soldier, I see no reason whatsoever for any such fear. Moreover, as regards the Saar territory I made it quite clear that we would not countenance any refusal to return it to Germany.

No, I have confirmed this attitude toward France as an expression of appreciation of the need to attain peace in Europe, instead of sowing the seed of continual uncertainty and even tension by making unlimited demands and continually asking for revision. If this tension has nevertheless now arisen, the responsibility does not lie with Germany but with those international elements that systematically promote such tension in order to serve their capitalist interests.

I have made binding declarations to a large number of states. None of those states can complain that even a trace of a demand contrary thereto has ever been made of them by Germany. No Scandinavian statesman, for example, can claim that a request has ever been put to him by the German government or by German public opinion that is incompatible with the sovereignty or integrity of his country.

I was pleased that a number of European states availed themselves of these declarations by the German government to express and emphasize their desire, as well, for absolute neutrality. This applies to Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, and so forth. I have already mentioned France. I need not mention Italy, with which we are united in the deepest and closest friendship, nor Hungary and Yugoslavia, with whom, as neighbors, our relations are fortunately of the friendliest.

Furthermore, I have left no doubt from the first moment of my political activity that there existed other circumstances that represent so mean and gross an outrage of the right of self-determination of our people that we can never accept or endorse them. I have never written a single line or made a single speech displaying a different attitude towards the states just mentioned. Moreover, with reference to the other cases, I have never written a single line or made a single speech in which I have expressed any attitude contrary to my actions.

One. Austria, the oldest eastern march [*Ostmark*] of the German people, was once the buttress of the German Nation on the south-east of the Reich. The Germans of that country are descended from settlers from all the German tribes, even though the Bavarian tribe contributed the major portion. Later this *Ostmark* became the foundation of a centuries-old imperial realm, with Vienna as the capital of the German Reich of that period.

# The GERMAN REICH May 1939



That German Reich was finally broken up in the course of a gradual dissolution by Napoleon, the Corsican, but continued to exist as a German federation, and not so long ago fought and suffered in the greatest war of all time as a political entity that was the expression of the national feelings of the people, even if it was no longer one united state. I myself am a child of that *Ostmark*.

Not only was the German Reich beaten down and Austria broken up into its component parts by the criminals of Versailles, but Germans were also forbidden to acknowledge that community to which they had declared their adherence for more than a thousand years. I have always regarded the elimination of this state of affairs as the greatest and most sacred task of my life. I have never failed to proclaim this determination, and I have always been resolved to realize these ideas that haunted me day and night.

I would have sinned against my call by Providence had I failed in my own endeavor to lead my native country and my German people of the *Ostmark* back to the Reich, / 8 and thus to the national community of the German people. In doing so, moreover, I have erased the most disgraceful page of the Treaty of Versailles. I have established the right of self-determination once again, and have done away with the democratic countries' oppression of seven and a half million Germans. I have lifted the ban that prevented them from voting on their own fate, and carried through the historic referendum. The result was not only what I had expected, but also precisely what had been anticipated by the Versailles democratic oppressors of nations. For why else had they forbidden a referendum on the question of Union [*Anschluss*]

Two. Bohemia and Moravia. When in the course of the migrations of peoples Germanic tribes began, for reasons inexplicable to us, to migrate out of the territory that today is Bohemia and Moravia, a foreign Slavic people made its way into this territory, and made a place for itself amongst the remaining Germans. Since that time the area occupied by this Slavic people has been enclosed in the form of a horseshoe by Germans.

From an economic point of view an independent existence is, in the long run, impossible for these lands except in the context of a close relationship with the German nation and the German economy. But apart from that, nearly four million Germans lived in this territory of Bohemia and Moravia. A policy of national annihilation that set in, particularly after the Treaty of Versailles, under pressure of the Czech majority, combined, too, with economic conditions and the rising tide of distress, led to some emigration of those German, so that the Germans left in the territory were reduced to

approximately 3,700,000. The population of the fringe of the territory is uniformly German, but there are also large German linguistic enclaves in the interior.

The Czech nation is in its origin foreign to us, but in the thousand years in which the two peoples have lived side by side, Czech culture has been significantly formed and molded by German influences. The Czech economy is the result of its connection with the greater German economic system. The capital of this country [Prague] was for a time a German imperial city, and it has the oldest German university. / 9 Numerous cathedrals, city halls, and residences of nobles and citizens alike bear witness to the German cultural influence.

The Czech people itself has in the course of centuries alternated between close and more distant relations with the German people. Every close contact resulted in a period in which both the German and the Czech nations flourished; every estrangement was calamitous in its consequences.

We are familiar with the merits and values of the German nation, but the Czech nation, with the sum total of its skill and ability, its industry, its diligence, its love of its native soil, and of its own national heritage, also deserves our respect. In fact, there were periods when this mutual respect for the qualities of the other nation was a matter of course.

The democratic peacemakers of Versailles can take the credit for having assigned to the Czech people the special role of a satellite state, which could be used against Germany. For this purpose they arbitrarily adjudicated foreign national property to the Czech state, which was utterly incapable of survival on the strength of the Czech national unit alone. That is, they did violence to other nationalities in order to secure a basis for a state that was to be a latent threat to the German nation in Central Europe.

For this state [Czechoslovakia], in which the so-called predominant national element was actually in the minority, could be maintained only by means of a brutal violation of the national units that made up the majority of the population. / 10 This violation was possible only in so far as protection and assistance were granted by the European democracies. This assistance could naturally be expected only on condition that this state was prepared loyally to adopt and play the role which had been assigned to at birth. But the purpose of this role was none other than to prevent the consolidation of Central Europe, to provide a bridge into Europe for Bolshevik aggression, and above all to act as a mercenary of the European democracies against Germany.

Everything then followed automatically. The more this state tried to fulfill the task it had been set, the greater was the resistance put up by the national minorities. And the greater the resistance, the more necessary it became to resort to oppression. This inevitable heightening of the inner contradictions led in its turn to an increased dependence on the European democratic founders and benefactors of the state, for they alone were in a position to maintain in the long run the economic existence of this unnatural and artificial creation. Germany was primarily interested in one thing only, namely, to liberate the nearly four million Germans in this country from their intolerable situation, and to make it possible for their return to their home country and to the thousand-year-old Reich.

It was only natural that this problem immediately brought up all the other aspects of the nationalities problem. It was also natural that the withdrawal of the different national groups would deprive what was left of the state of all capacity to survive – a fact of which the founders of the state had been well aware when they planned it at Versailles. It was for this very reason that they had decided to do violence on the other minorities, and forced these against their will to become part of this amateurishly constructed state.

I have, moreover, never left any doubt about my opinion and attitude on this matter. It is true that, as long as Germany herself was powerless and defenseless, this oppression of almost four million Germans could be carried out without the Reich offering any practical resistance. However, only a child in politics could have believed that the German nation would remain forever in the condition that it was in 1919. Only as long as the international traitors, supported from abroad, held the control of the German state, could one be sure of these disgraceful conditions being patiently tolerated. From the moment when, after the victory of National Socialism, these traitors had to transfer their domicile to the place from where they had received their subsidies, the solution of this problem was only a question of time. Moreover, this was exclusively a matter involving the nationalities concerned, and not one concerning Western Europe.

It was certainly understandable that Western Europe was interested in the artificial state that had been created for its interests. But that the nations surrounding this state should regard those interests as a determining factor for them was a false conclusion, which some may perhaps have regretted. In so far as those interests involved only the financial establishment of that state, Germany would have



had no objection. But those financial interests were, in the final analysis, also entirely subordinate to the power-political goals of the democracies.

The financial assistance given too this state was guided by a single consideration, namely creation of a state armed to the teeth that could be a valuable bastion extending into the German Reich, which could constitute a basis for military operations in connection with invasions of the Reich from the west, or at any rate serve as an air base.

What was expected from this state is shown most clearly by the observation of the French Air Minister, M. Pierre Cot, who calmly stated / 11 that the function of this state in case of any conflict was to be an air base for the landing and taking off of bombers, from which it would be possible to destroy the most important German industrial centers in a few hours. It is, therefore, understandable that the German government for its part decided to destroy this air base for bombers. It did not come to this decision out of hatred of the Czech people. Quite the contrary. For in the course of the thousand years during which the German and Czech peoples have lived together, there were often periods of close cooperation lasting hundreds of years, interrupted, to be sure, by only short periods of tension. In such periods of tension the passions of the people struggling with each other on their ethnic front lines can very easily dim the sense of justice, and thus give a false general picture. That's a feature of every war. Only during the long epochs of living together in harmony did the two peoples agree that they were both entitled to make a sacred claim for regard and respect for their nationality.

In these years of struggle my own attitude towards the Czech people has been solely confined to the guardianship of national and Reich interests, combined with feelings of respect for the Czech people. One thing is certain however. Even if the democratic midwives of this state had succeeded in attaining their ultimate goal, the German Reich would certainly not have been destroyed, although we might have sustained heavy losses. No, the Czech people, by reason of its limited size and its position, would presumably have had to endure much more terrible, and indeed – I am convinced – catastrophic consequences.

I am happy that it has proved possible, even if to the annoyance of democratic interests, to prevent such a catastrophe in Central Europe, thanks to our own moderation and also to the good judgment of the Czech people. That which the best and wisest Czechs have struggled for decades to attain, is as a matter of course granted to this people in the National Socialist German Reich – namely, the right to their own nationality and the right to foster this nationality and to revive it. National Socialist Germany has no notion of ever betraying the ethnic-racial principles of which we are proud. They are beneficial not only to the German nation, but to the Czech people as well. What we demand is the recognition of a historical necessity and of an economic exigency in which we all find ourselves. When I announced the solution of this problem in the Reichstag on February 22, 1938, I was convinced that I was obeying the necessity of a Central European situation.

Even in March 1938, I still believed that by means of a gradual evolution it might prove possible to solve the problem of minorities in this state and, at one time or another, by means of mutual cooperation to arrive at a common understanding that would be advantageous to all interests concerned, politically as well as economically.

It was only after Mr. Benes, who was completely in the hands of his democratic international financiers, turned the problem into a military one and unleashed a wave of suppression over the Germans, while at the same time attempting by that mobilization of which you all know, / 12 to inflict an international defeat on the German state, and to damage its prestige, that it became clear to me that a solution by those means was no longer possible. For the false report at that time of a German mobilization was quite obviously inspired from abroad and suggested to the Czechs in order to cause the German Reich such a loss of prestige.

I do not need to repeat again that in May of the past year Germany had not mobilized one single man, although we were all of the opinion that the very fate of Mr. Schuschnigg / 13 should have shown all others the advisability of working for mutual understanding by means of a more just treatment of national minorities.

I for my part was at any rate prepared to attempt this kind of peaceful development with patience, though, if need be, the process might last some years. However, it was exactly such a peaceful solution that was a thorn in the flesh of the agitators in the democracies.

They hate us Germans and would prefer to eradicate us completely. What do the Czechs mean to them? They are nothing but means to an end. And what do they care for the fate of that small and valiant nation? What concern to they have for the lives of hundreds of thousands of brave soldiers who would have been sacrificed for their policy?

These Western European peace-mongers were not concerned to work for peace but to cause bloodshed so as in that way to set the nations against one another and thus cause still more blood to flow. For this reason they invented the story of German mobilization and misled Prague public opinion with it. It was intended to provide an excuse for the Czech mobilization; and then by this means they hoped to be able to exert the desired military pressure on the elections in Sudeten Germany / 14 which could no longer be avoided.

In their view there remained only two alternatives for Germany: Either to accept this Czech mobilization and with it a disgraceful blow to her prestige, or to settle accounts with Czechoslovakia. This would have meant a bloody war, perhaps entailing the mobilization of the peoples of Western Europe, who had no interest in these matters, thereby involving them in the inevitable bloodlust and immersing humanity in a new catastrophe in which some would have the honor of losing their lives and others the pleasure of making war profits.

You are acquainted, gentlemen, with the decisions I quickly made at the time:

1. To solve this question and, what's more, by October 2, 1938, at the latest.
2. To prepare this solution by all the means required to leave no doubt that any attempt at intervention would be met by the united force of the whole nation.

It was then that I decreed and ordered the strengthening of our western fortifications. / 15 By September 25, 1938, they were already in such a condition that their defensive strength was thirty to forty times greater than that of the old "Siegfried Line" of the [First World] War. They are now mostly completed, and right now are being extended with new defense lines outside of Aachen and Saarbrücken, which I ordered later. These, too, are very largely ready for defense. Considering the scale of these, the greatest fortifications ever constructed, the German nation can feel perfectly assured that no power in this world will ever succeed in breaking through that front.

When the first provocative attempt at utilizing the Czech mobilization had failed to produce the desired result, the second phase began, in which the motives underlying a question that really concerned Central Europe alone, became all the more obvious.

If the cry of "Never another Munich" is raised in the world today, this simply confirms the fact that those warmongers regarded the peaceful solution of the problem to be the most pernicious thing that ever happened. They are sorry no blood was shed – not their blood, to be sure – for these agitators are, of course, never to be found where shots are being fired, but rather where money is being made. No, it would be the blood of many nameless soldiers!

Moreover, there would have been no need for the Munich Conference, / 16 for that conference was only made possible by the fact that the countries which had at first incited those concerned to resist at all costs, were compelled later on, when the situation pressed for a solution in one way or another, to try to secure for themselves a more or less respectable retreat; for without Munich – that is to say, without the interference of the countries of Western Europe – a solution of the entire problem, if it had grown so acute at all, would very likely have been the easiest thing in the world.

The Munich decision led to the following results:

One. The return to the Reich of the most essential parts of the [ethnic] German border settlements in Bohemia and Moravia. / 17

Two. The keeping open of the possibility of a solution of the other problems of that state – that is, a return and separation, respectively, of the existing Hungarian and Slovak [ethnic] minorities;

Three. The guarantee question still remained open. As far as Germany and Italy were concerned, a guarantee of [the continued existence of] that state [Czechoslovakia] had, from the outset, been made dependent upon the consent of all interested parties bordering on that state – that is to say, contingent on the actual solution of problems concerning the parties mentioned, which were still unsolved.

The following problems were still left open:

1. The return of the Magyar [ethnically Hungarian] districts to Hungary;
2. The return of the [ethnically] Polish districts to Poland;
3. The solution of the Slovak question;
4. The solution of the [ethnic] Ukrainian question.

As you know, the negotiations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia had scarcely begun when both the Czechoslovakian and the Hungarian negotiators made a request to Germany and Italy, a country that stands side by side with Germany, to act as arbitrators in determining the new borders between Slovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine and Hungary. / 18 The countries concerned did not avail themselves of the opportunity of appealing to the Four Powers. On the contrary, they expressly renounced that opportunity – that is, they declined it. And that was quite understandable. All the people living in this area desired peace and quiet. Italy and Germany were prepared to answer the call. Neither Britain nor France raised any objection to this arrangement, even though it constituted a formal departure from the Munich Agreement. Nor could they have done so. It would have been madness for Paris or London to have protested against an action on the part of Germany or Italy, which had been undertaken solely at the request of the countries concerned.

The arbitration decision arrived at by Germany and Italy proved – as always happens in such cases – entirely satisfactory to neither party. From the outset the difficulty was that it had to be accepted voluntarily by both [affected] parties. As the arbitration decision was being put into effect, the two states quickly raised strong objections after having accepted it. Hungary, prompted by both general and specific interests, demanded the Carpatho-Ukraine region, / 19 while Poland demanded a common border with Hungary. It was clear that, under such circumstances, even the remnant of the state that Versailles had brought into being was doomed.

In fact, perhaps only a single country was interested in the preservation of the earlier situation, and that was Romania. The man best authorized to speak on behalf of that country told me personally how desirable it would be to have a direct connection with Germany, perhaps by way of Ukraine and Slovakia. I mention this as an indication of the feeling of being menaced by Germany that the Romanian government – according to American clairvoyants – was supposed to be suffering.

It was now clear that Germany could not undertake the task of permanently opposing a development, much less to fight to maintain a state of affairs, for which we would never have made ourselves responsible. Thus, the stage had been reached at which I decided to make a declaration in the name of the German government, to the effect that we had no intention of any longer incurring any further reproach by opposing the common wishes of Poland and Hungary with regard to their borders, simply in order to keep open a road of approach for Germany to Romania.

Since, moreover, the Czech government resorted once more to its old methods, and Slovakia also gave expression to its desire for independence, / 20 the further maintenance of the state was now out of the question. Czechoslovakia as constructed at Versailles had had its day. It collapsed not because Germany desired its breakup, but because in the long run it is impossible to create and sustain artificial states at the conference table, for they are incapable of survival. / 21 A few days before the dissolution of that state, in response to an inquiry by Britain and France regarding a guarantee [of the existence of Czechoslovakia], Germany therefore refused to give such a guarantee, because all the conditions for it laid down at Munich no longer existed.

On the contrary, after the entire structure of the state had begun to break up and had already practically dissolved, the German government also finally decided to intervene. It did so only in fulfillment of an obvious duty. In that regard, the following should be noted: On the occasion of the first visit to Munich of the Czech Foreign Minister, Mr. Chvalkovsky, / 22 the German government plainly expressed its views on the future of Czechoslovakia. I myself assured Mr. Chvalkovsky on that occasion that provided that the large [ethnic] German minority remaining in Czechia was fairly treated, and provided that a general settlement throughout the state were achieved, we would pledge a supportive attitude on Germany's part, and would assuredly place no obstacles in the way of the state.

But I also made it clear beyond all doubt that if Czechia was to take any steps in line with the policies of the former president, Dr. Benes, Germany would not put up with any developments along such lines, but would nip them in the bud. I also pointed out at the same time that the maintenance of such a tremendous military arsenal in Central Europe for no reason or purpose could only be regarded as a source of danger.

Later developments proved how justified my warning had been. A continually rising tide of underground propaganda and a gradual tendency of Czech newspapers to relapse into their old ways made it obvious even to a simpleton that the old state of affairs would soon be restored. The danger of a military conflict was all the greater as there was always the possibility that some madman might gain control of those vast stores of war material. This involved the danger of explosions of unforeseeable extent.

As a proof of this, I am constrained, gentlemen, to give you an idea of the truly gigantic extent of this international storehouse of explosives in Central Europe.

Since the occupation of this territory, / 23 the following items have been taken over and secured: Air Force: airplanes, 1582; anti-aircraft guns, 501. Army: guns, light and heavy, 2175; trench mortars, 785; tanks, 469; machine guns, 43,876; pistols, 114,000; rifles, 1,090,000. Infantry munitions: more than 1,000,000,000 rounds; Artillery and gas munitions: more than 3,000,000 rounds; All kinds of other war implements, such as, bridge-building equipment, aircraft detectors, searchlights, distance measuring instruments, motor vehicles and special motor vehicles – in large quantities.

I believe that it's a blessing for millions and millions that, thanks to the last-minute insight of responsible men on the other side, I succeeded in averting such an explosion, and found a solution that, I am convinced, has finally eliminated this problem as a source of danger in Central Europe. The contention that this solution is contrary to the Munich Agreement can neither be justified nor supported. Under no circumstances could that Agreement be regarded as final, because it referred itself to other problems that required solution, and which would have to be solved.

We cannot justly be reproached for the fact that the parties concerned – and this is the key point – did not turn to the Four Powers, but only to Italy and Germany, / 24 nor for the fact that the state as such finally collapsed of its own accord, and that consequently Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. It was, however, entirely understandable that, long after ethnographic principles had been violated, Germany should take its own measures to protect her thousand-year-old interests, which are not only political but also economic in their nature.

The future will show whether the solution that Germany has found is right or wrong. One thing is certain, however, namely that this solution is not subject to British supervision or criticism. For Bohemia and Moravia, as the remnants of former Czechoslovakia, have nothing more to do with the Munich Agreement. Just as British measures, say in Ireland, / 25 whether they be right or wrong, are not subject to German supervision or criticism, the same principle holds good as well for these old German Electorates.

I entirely fail to understand how the agreement reached between Mr. Chamberlain and myself at Munich / 26 can apply in this case, for the case of Czechoslovakia was dealt with at the Munich Four Power Conference as far as it could be settled at all at that time. Beyond that, it was only provided that if the interested parties should fail to come to an agreement, they would be entitled to appeal to the Four Powers, who had agreed that in such an eventuality to meet for further consultation after the expiration of three months. However, those interested parties did not appeal to the Four Powers at all, but only to Germany and Italy. That this was fully justified, moreover, is proven by the fact that neither Britain nor France have raised any objections to it, but rather they themselves accepted the arbitration decision made by Germany and Italy.

No, the agreement reached between Mr. Chamberlain and myself had nothing to do with this problem, but solely with questions concerning relations between Britain and Germany. This is clearly shown by the fact that such questions are to be dealt with in the future in the spirit of the Munich Agreement and of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement / 27 – that is, in a friendly spirit by way of consultation. If, however, that agreement were to be applied to every future German activity of a political nature, Britain, too, should not take any step – whether in Palestine or elsewhere – without first consulting Germany. It is obvious that we do not expect that; likewise, we reject any similar expectation of us. If Mr. Chamberlain now concludes from this that the Munich Agreement has become invalid because we have broken it, I will note that view and draw the necessary conclusions.

During the whole of my political activity I have always stood for the idea of a close friendship and cooperation between Germany and Britain. In my movement I found countless others of like mind. Perhaps they joined me because of my attitude in this regard. This desire for Anglo-German friendship and cooperation conforms not merely to sentiments based on the [similar] heritage of our two peoples, but also on my realization of the importance of the existence of the British Empire for the whole of humankind.

I have never left any doubt of my belief that the existence of this empire is an inestimable factor of value for the whole of human culture and economic life. By whatever means Great Britain has acquired her colonial territories – and I know that they were those of force and often brutality – nevertheless I am well aware that no other empire has ever come into being in any other way, and that, in the final analysis and from a historical perspective, it is not so much the methods that are taken into account as success, and not the success of the methods as such, but rather the general good that those methods produce.



Now, there is no doubt that the Anglo-Saxon people has accomplished immense colonizing work in the world. For this work I have sincere admiration. The thought of destroying that labor seemed and still seems to me, from the higher point of view of humanity, as nothing but a manifestation of human wanton destructiveness. Yet, my sincere respect for this achievement does not mean that I will neglect to secure the life of my own people.

I regard it as impossible to achieve a lasting friendship between the German and the Anglo-Saxon peoples if the other side does not recognize that just as the preservation of the global British empire is regarded by Britons as a vital purpose and goal, so likewise do Germans regard the freedom and preservation of the German Reich. A genuine lasting friendship between these two nations is conceivable only on a basis of mutual respect.

The British people rule a great global empire. They built up this empire at a time when the German people were internally weak. Germany had once been a great empire. At one time she ruled the Occident. In bloody wars and religious conflicts, and as a result of internal political divisions, that empire declined in power and greatness and finally fell into a deep sleep. But when that old Reich appeared to have reached its end, the seeds of its rebirth were springing up. From Brandenburg and Prussia there arose a new Germany, the Second Reich, and out of it has at last grown the German People's Reich.

I also hope that all the British understand that we do not possess the slightest feeling of inferiority to Britons. Our historical past is too tremendous for that Britain has given the world many great men, and Germany no less. The severe struggle to maintain the life of our people has, in the course of three centuries, cost a sacrifice in lives that far exceeds that which other peoples have had to make to maintain their existence.

If Germany, a country that was forever being attacked, was not able to hold on to her possessions, but was compelled to sacrifice many of her provinces, that was due solely to her political maldevelopment and the impotence that resulted from it. That condition has now been overcome. Therefore, we Germans do not feel in the least inferior to the British nation. Our self-esteem is just as great as that of an Englishman. The history of our people over almost two thousand years provides events and accomplishments enough to fill us with justifiable pride.

Now, if Britain cannot understand our point of view, thinking perchance that she may regard Germany as a vassal state, then our affection and friendship have indeed been offered in vain. We shall not despair or lose heart on that account, but – relying on the consciousness of our own strength and on the strength of our friends – we shall find ways and means to secure our independence without impairing our dignity.

I have noted the statement of the British Prime Minister to the effect that he is unable to put any trust in German assurances. / 28 Under these circumstances I regard it as a matter of course that we should no longer expect him or the British people to accept a situation that has become onerous to them and which is sustainable only on the basis of mutual confidence.

When Germany became National Socialist / 29 and thus paved the way for her national resurrection, in pursuance of my unswerving policy of friendship with Britain, of my own accord I made a proposal for a voluntary restriction of German naval armaments. / 30 That restriction was, however, based on one condition, namely the will and the conviction that a war between Britain and Germany would never again be possible. That will and that conviction I still hold today.

Now, however, I am compelled to state that the policy of Britain, both unofficially and officially, permits no doubt that such a conviction is no longer shared in London, and that, on the contrary, the opinion prevails there that no matter in what conflict Germany might one day be entangled, Great Britain will always have to stand against Germany. Thus war against Germany is more or less taken for granted there.

I most profoundly regret such a development, for the only claim I have ever made and shall continue to make of Britain is for the return of our colonies. But I always made it very clear that this would never become a cause of military conflict. I have always held that the British, for whom those colonies are of no value, would one day understand the German situation, and would then value German friendship higher than the possession of territories that, while yielding no real profit whatever to them, are of vital importance for Germany.

Apart from that, however, I have never advanced a claim that might in any way have interfered with British interests, or that might become a danger to the Empire, and thus might mean any harm for

Britain. I have always made sure that such demands as have been made have always been closely connected with Germany's vital territory, and with the inalienable property of the German nation.

Now that Britain, both in the press and officially, now expresses the view that Germany should be opposed under all circumstances, and confirms this through the well-known policy of encirclement, the basis for the [1935] Naval Treaty has been removed. I have therefore resolved to send today a communication to that effect to the British government.

This is to us not a matter of practical material importance – for I still hope that we shall be able to avoid an armaments race with Britain – but rather a matter of self-respect. If the British government, however, wishes to enter once more into negotiations with Germany on this problem, no one would be happier than I at the prospect of being able, after all, to come to a clear and straightforward understanding. Moreover, I know my people, and I rely on them. We do not want anything that did not formerly belong to us, and no state will ever be robbed by us of its property; but anyone who believes that he is able to attack Germany will find himself confronted with a measure of power and resistance compared with which that of 1914 was negligible.

In connection with that I wish to speak here and now of that matter that was chosen as the starting-point for the new campaign against the Reich by those same circles that caused the mobilization of Czechoslovakia. I have already assured you, gentlemen, at the beginning of my speech, that never, either in the case of Austria or in the case of Czechoslovakia, have I adopted any attitude in my political life that is not compatible with events that have now happened. I therefore pointed out in connection with the problem of the Memel Germans that this question, if it was not solved by Lithuania itself in a dignified and generous manner, would one day have to be raised by Germany.

You know that the Memel territory was also once torn from the Reich quite arbitrarily by the Dictate of Versailles and that finally, in the year 1923 – that is to say, in the midst of a period of complete peace – that territory was occupied by Lithuania, and thus more or less confiscated. The fate of the Germans has since then been sheer martyrdom.

In the course of reincorporating Bohemia and Moravia within the framework of the German Reich it was also possible for me to come to an agreement with the Lithuanian government that allowed the return of that territory to Germany without any act of violence and without shedding blood. / 31 In this instance as well, I have not demanded one square mile more than we formerly possessed, but which had been stolen from us.

This means, therefore, only that a territory has returned to the German Reich which had been torn from us by the madmen who dictated peace at Versailles. But this solution, I am convinced, will only prove advantageous with regard to relations between Germany and Lithuania. That's because Germany, as our attitude has proved, has no other interest than to live in peace and friendship with that country, and to establish and foster economic relations with it.

In that connection I wish to make one point perfectly clear. The significance of economic agreements with Germany lies not only in the fact that Germany is able as an exporter to meet almost all industrial needs, but also that, being a very large consumer, it is at the same time also a purchaser of numerous products which alone enables other countries to participate in international trade at all.

We are interested not only in maintaining those economic markets, but even more in fostering them, because the existence of our people is to a large extent dependent on them. So-called democratic statesmen regard it as a great political achievement to exclude a nation from its markets, for example, by boycott, presumably in order to starve it out. I need not tell you that any nation would assuredly rather fight than starve under such circumstances.

As far as Germany is concerned, it is in any case determined not to allow certain economically important markets to be stolen from it by threats or brutal intervention. And that's not only for our own sake, but it's also in the interest of our trading partners. Here, as in every business relationship, dependence is not one-sided but mutual.

How often do we have the pleasure of reading in amateurish articles on economic affairs in the newspapers of the democracies that Germany, because it maintains close economic relations with a country, makes that country dependent upon her. This is utterly absurd Jewish nonsense. For if Germany supplies an agrarian country today with machines and receives foodstuffs in payment, the Reich as a consumer of foodstuffs is at least as dependent, if not more dependent, on the agrarian country as the latter is dependent on us, from whom it receives industrial products in payment.

Germany regards the Baltic states as among its most important trade partners. For that reason it is in our interest that these countries should lead an independent, orderly national life of their own. In our view, that's a prerequisite for the internal economic development that is in turn the condition upon which the exchange of goods depends. I am, therefore, happy that we have been able to dispose also of the point of dispute between Lithuania and Germany. That removes the only obstacle in the way of a policy of friendship, which can prove its worth – as I am convinced it will – not in mere political phrases but in practical economic measures.

It was assuredly once more quite a blow to the democratic world that there was no bloodshed – that 175,000 Germans were able to return to the homeland which they loved above all else without a few hundred thousand others having to be shot for it. This deeply grieved the apostles of humanitarianism. It was, therefore, no wonder that they immediately began to look for new possibilities for once again bringing about a thorough disturbance of the European atmosphere. And so, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, they again resorted to the assertion that Germany was taking military measures, and that it was supposed to be mobilizing. That mobilization was said to be directed against Poland.

I want to say something about German-Polish relations. In this case as well, the Peace Treaty of Versailles – of course, intentionally – wounded Germany most severely. The peculiar way in which the Corridor, giving Poland access to the sea, was marked out, was meant above all to prevent for all time the establishment of an understanding between Poland and Germany. This, as I have already emphasized, is perhaps the most troublesome of all Germany's problems.

Nevertheless, I have never ceased to uphold the view that the necessity of a free access to the [Baltic] sea for the Polish state cannot be ignored. That is a general principle, equally valid for this case. Nations that Providence has destined or, if you will, condemned, to live side by side, would be well advised not to make life still harder for each other by artificial and unnecessary means. The late Marshal Pilsudski, who was of the same opinion, was therefore prepared to go into the question of clarifying the atmosphere of German-Polish relations and finally to conclude an agreement / 32 whereby Germany and Poland expressed their intention of renouncing war altogether as a means of settling the questions which concerned them both.

That agreement contained one single exception, which was in effect a concession to Poland. It was laid down that the pacts of mutual assistance already entered into by Poland – this applied to a pact with France – should not be affected by the agreement. But it was obvious that this could apply only to the pact of mutual assistance already concluded beforehand, and not to whatever new pacts might be concluded in the future. It is a fact that the German-Polish agreement resulted in a remarkable lessening of tension in Europe. Nevertheless, there remained one question open between Germany and Poland which sooner or later, quite naturally, would have to be solved – the question of the German city of Danzig. / 33

Danzig is a German city and wishes to belong to Germany. On the other hand this city has contracts with Poland that, admittedly, were forced upon it by the dictators of the Peace of Versailles. Moreover, since the League of Nations, formerly the greatest trouble maker, is now represented by a High Commissioner – incidentally a man of extraordinary tact – the problem of Danzig must in any case come up for discussion, at any rate before that calamitous League gradually reaches its end.

I regarded the peaceful settlement of this problem as a further contribution to the ultimate easing of tension in Europe. For the easing of tensions cannot be achieved through the agitation of insane warmongers, but only through the removal of the real elements of danger. After the problem of Danzig had already been discussed several times some months ago, I made a concrete offer to the Polish government. I now make this offer known to you, gentlemen, and you yourselves may judge whether this offer did not represent the greatest concession imaginable in the interests of European peace.

As I have already pointed out, I have always seen the necessity of an access to the sea for that country and have consequently taken that necessity into consideration. I am not a democratic statesman, but a National Socialist and a realist. I considered it necessary, however, to make it clear to the government in Warsaw that, just as they desire access to the sea, so Germany needs access to her province in the East. / 34

Now these are all difficult problems. It is not Germany that is responsible for them, however, but rather the jugglers of Versailles who, either in their malice or their thoughtlessness, placed a hundred explosive charges round about in Europe, all equipped with lighted fuses that would be difficult to extinguish.

These problems cannot be solved with old-fashioned ideas. I think rather that we should adopt new methods. Poland's access to the sea by way of the Corridor on the one hand, and a German route through the Corridor on the other, have no military importance whatsoever. Their importance is exclusively psychological and economic. To attach military importance to a traffic route of this kind, would be to show oneself completely ignorant of military affairs.

Consequently, I have caused the following proposals to be submitted to the Polish government:

1. Danzig to return as a Free State into the framework of the German Reich.
2. Germany to obtain a route through the Corridor and a railway line for herself with the same extra-territorial status for Germany as the Corridor itself has for Poland.

In return, Germany is prepared:

1. To recognize all Polish economic rights in Danzig.
2. To insure Poland of a free harbor in Danzig of any size desired, with completely free access.
3. To accept at the same time the present boundaries between Germany and Poland, and to regard them as final.
4. To conclude a twenty-five-year non-aggression treaty with Poland, a treaty therefore which would extend far beyond the duration of my own life; and
5. To enter into a guarantee of the independence of the Slovak state by Germany, Poland and Hungary jointly – which means in practice, renunciation of any exclusive German hegemony in this territory.

The Polish government has rejected my offer and has declared itself prepared only

1. To negotiate concerning the question of a substitute for the Commissioner of the League of Nations, and
2. To consider easing restrictions on [German non-stop] transit traffic through the Corridor.

This incomprehensible attitude of the Polish government was a matter of deep regret to me. But that's not all. The worst is that Poland, like Czechoslovakia a year ago, under the pressure of an international campaign of lies, now believes that it must call up troops, even though Germany has not called up a single man, and had no thought of taking any measures against Poland.

As I have said, this is highly regrettable. Posterity will one day decide whether it was really right to refuse this proposal of mine. As I have also said, it was an endeavor on my part to solve, by a compromise that is truly unique, a question intimately affecting the German people – and to solve it to the advantage of both countries. I am convinced that this solution would not have meant any giving, but only getting, on the part of Poland, for there should be no shadow of doubt that Danzig never will become Polish.

Germany's intention to attack was a sheer invention of the international press. This, as you know, led to an offer of so-called guarantees and to an obligation of the Polish government for mutual assistance. Under certain circumstances Poland would also be compelled by this to take military action against Germany in the event of a conflict between Germany and any other power, if such conflict in turn involved Britain.

This obligation is contrary to the agreement I made some time ago with Marshal Pilsudski, considering that in that agreement reference is made exclusively to existing obligations, which meant at that time the obligations of Poland towards France, of which we were aware. The subsequent extension of these obligations is contrary to the terms of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact.

Under these circumstances I would not have entered into that pact. For what can be the value of concluding non-aggression pacts if one partner makes a number of exceptions in the execution of them? The alternatives are either collective security, which is nothing but collective insecurity and continuous danger of war, or clear cut agreements that exclude fundamentally any use of arms between the contracting parties. I, therefore, regard the agreement that Marshal Pilsudski and I once concluded as having been unilaterally infringed by Poland and therefore voided.



I have sent a communication to that effect to the Polish government. However, I can only repeat at this point that my decision does not constitute a modification in principle of my attitude with regard to the problems I have just mentioned. Should the Polish government wish to make fresh contractual arrangement determining its relations with Germany, I can only welcome such an idea, provided, of course, that such an arrangement is based on absolutely clear obligations binding both parties equally. Germany is perfectly willing at any time to undertake such obligations, and also to fulfill them.

If these things have brought about the outbreak of fresh unrest in Europe during the last few weeks, it is the well-known propaganda of international warmongers that is solely responsible for it. This propaganda conducted by numerous organs of the democratic states endeavors, by constantly building up nervous tension, and by inventing continual rumors, to make Europe ripe for a catastrophe – a catastrophe by which it is hoped to bring about what has not yet been achieved, namely, the Bolshevik destruction of European civilization.

The hate of these mischief makers is all the more readily understandable because they were deprived of one of the most critical danger spots in Europe, thanks to the heroism of one man and his nation, and – I may say – thanks also to Italian and German volunteers. In recent weeks Germany has witnessed the victory of Nationalist Spain with the most fervent sympathy and rejoicing. When I resolved to answer the plea of General Franco to approve assistance from National Socialist Germany in countering the international support of the Bolshevik incendiaries, that step of Germany's was outrageously misrepresented and vilified by those same international agitators.

At the time it was claimed that Germany intended to establish herself in Spain, and that we were considering seizing Spanish colonies; they even invented the infamous lie of the landing of 20,000 soldiers in Morocco. In short, nothing was left undone to cast doubt on the idealism of our support and the support of Italy in an effort to find material for renewed warmongering.

In a few weeks from now, the victorious hero of Nationalist Spain will celebrate his festive entry into the capital of his country. The Spanish people will acclaim him as their deliverer from unspeakable horrors and as the liberator from bands of incendiaries, of whom it is estimated that they have more than 775,000 human lives on their conscience, by executions and murders alone. The inhabitants of whole villages and towns were literally butchered while their benevolent patrons, the democratic humanitarian apostles of Western Europe and America, remained silent.

In this, his triumphal procession, the volunteers of our German legion will march, together with their Italian comrades, in the ranks of the valiant Spanish soldiers. It is our hope to welcome them home soon afterwards. The German nation will then know how bravely its own sons too have played their part on that soil, in the struggle for the freedom of a noble people. It was a struggle for the salvation of European civilization, for if the subhuman forces of Bolshevism had proven victorious in Spain, they might well have spread across the whole of Europe.

Hence the hatred of those who are disappointed that Europe did not once more go up in fire and flames. For this very reason they are doubly anxious to miss no opportunity of sowing the seeds of mistrust among the nations and stirring up elsewhere the war atmosphere that they so much desire. Some of the lying statements fabricated in the past few weeks by these international warmongers and published in numerous newspapers are just as childish as they are malicious. The first result – apart from serving the internal political purposes of the democratic governments – is the spreading of a nervous hysteria which even makes the landing of Martians seem possible in the land of unlimited possibilities. / 35 The real purpose, however, is to prepare public opinion to regard the British encirclement policy as necessary and, consequently, to support it, should the worst come to the worst.

The German people, on the other hand, can go about their business with perfect tranquility. Their frontiers are guarded by the best army in the history of Germany. The sky is protected by the most powerful air fleet, and our coasts are rendered unassailable by any enemy power. In the west, the strongest defensive work of all times has been built.

But the decisive factors are the unity of the German nation as a whole, the confidence of all Germans in one another, and in their fighting forces and – if I may say so – the faith of all in their leadership.

But the trust of the people and their leadership in our friends is no less. Foremost among these is the state which is closest to us in every respect as a result of the common destinies that unite us. This year Fascist Italy has once again shown the fullest understanding for Germany's just interests. No one should be surprised if we, for our part, have the same feelings for Italy's vital needs. The bond that unites these two peoples cannot be severed. All attempts to cast doubt on this are laughable. In any case, this is best confirmed by an article that appeared a few days ago in a leading democratic

newspaper, which stated that it should no longer be considered possible to separate Italy and Germany in order to destroy them separately.

Thus the German government fully understands and appreciates the justice of the action taken by its Italian friend in Albania and has, therefore, welcomed it. Yes, it is not only the right, but also the duty of Fascism to secure for Italy, in the area unquestionably allotted to her by nature and history, the maintenance of an order that is obviously the only basis and security for a really flourishing human civilization.

After all, there can be just as little room for doubt in the rest of the world concerning the civilizing work of Fascism as there is about that of National Socialism. In both instances indisputable facts stand in contradistinction to the unfounded fibbing and unproved claims of the other side. Fostering ever closer ties between Germany, Italy and Japan is the constant aim of the German government. We regard the existence and maintenance of the freedom and independence of these three great powers as the strongest factor for the future, making for the preservation of a truly human culture, a practical civilization and a just order in the world.

As I mentioned at the beginning, on April 15, 1939, the world was informed of the contents of a telegram that I myself did not see until later. It is difficult to classify this document or to place it in any known category. I will, therefore attempt, gentlemen, to present to you – and so to the whole German people – an analysis of the contents of this remarkable piece of writing, and in your name and in the name of the German people, to give appropriate answers to it.

1. Mr. Roosevelt is of the opinion that I, too, must realize that throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars. This, he says, is of concern to the people of the United States, for whom he speaks, as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire Western Hemisphere.

Answer: In reply to this it must be said in the first place that this fear of war has undoubtedly existed among humankind from time immemorial, and justifiably so.

For instance, after the Peace Treaty of Versailles, 14 wars were waged between 1919 and 1938 alone, in none of which Germany was involved, but in which states of the “Western Hemisphere,” in whose name President Roosevelt also speaks, were certainly involved. In addition there were in that same period 26 violent interventions and sanctions carried through by means of bloodshed and force. Germany played no part whatever in those either. Since 1918 the United States alone has carried out military interventions in six cases. Since 1918 Soviet Russia has engaged in ten wars and military actions involving force and bloodshed. Again, Germany was involved in none of those, nor was it responsible for any of them.

In my view, it would therefore be a mistake to assume that the fear of war that concerns European and non-European nations can at this moment be traced back to actual wars for which Germany could be considered responsible. The reason for this fear lies entirely in an unbridled agitation on the part of the press, an agitation as mendacious as it is base – in the circulation of vile pamphlets against the heads of foreign states, and in the artificial spreading of panic, which finally goes so far that interventions from another planet are believed possible, leading to scenes of desperate fear. / 36

I believe that as soon as the governments responsible impose upon themselves and their organs of mass media the necessary restraint and concern for the truth with regard to the relations of the various nations to one another, and in particular with regard to the internal happenings in other countries, the fear of war will disappear at once, and the tranquility which we all so much desire will become possible.

2. In his telegram Mr. Roosevelt expresses the belief that every major war, even if it were confined to other continents, must have serious consequences not only while it lasts, but for generations to come.

Answer: No one knows this better than the German people. For the Peace Treaty of Versailles imposed burdens on the German people that could not have been paid off in a hundred years, although it has been proven conclusively by American scholars of international law, historians and professors of history that Germany was no more to blame for the outbreak of the war than any other nation. / 37

But I do not believe that every conflict must necessarily have disastrous consequences for the whole world, that is for the entire planet, provided that it is not artificially and systematically drawn into such conflicts through a network of pacts with nebulous obligations.

Given that in past centuries and – as I pointed out earlier in my response – in the course of the recent decades as well, the world has experienced a continuous series of wars, if Mr. Roosevelt's view is correct, the sum total of the impact of all these wars would have already imposed a burden on humanity that it would have to bear for millions of years to come.

3. Mr. Roosevelt declared that he had already appealed to me on a former occasion / 38 for a peaceful settlement of political, economic and social problems, without resort to arms.

Answer: I myself have always been an exponent of this view / 39 and, as history proves, have settled requisite political, economic and social problems without force of arms – without even resorting to arms. Unfortunately, however, this peaceful method of settlement has been made more difficult by the agitation of politicians, statesmen and people in the press who were neither directly concerned nor even affected by the problems in question.

4. Mr. Roosevelt believes that the “tide of events” is once more bringing the threat of arms with it, and that if this threat continues, a large part of the world is seemingly condemned to common ruin.

Answer: As far as Germany is concerned, I know nothing of this kind of threat to other nations, although every day I read lies about such a threat in the democratic newspapers. Every day I read of German mobilizations, of the landing of troops, of extortions – all this in connection with countries with which we are not only living absolutely peacefully, but with whom we are also, in many cases, the closest of friends.

5. Mr. Roosevelt believes further that in case of war, victorious, vanquished and neutral nations will all suffer alike.

Answer: In the course of my political career over a period of twenty years, I have been an exponent of this conviction, at a time when responsible statesmen in America, unfortunately, could not bring themselves to show the same understanding with regard to their role in the [First] World War and its consequences.

6. Mr. Roosevelt believes that in the end it lies with the leaders of the great nations to protect their peoples from the impending disaster.

Answer: If that is true, then it is culpable neglect, not to use a stronger word, if the leaders of nations in authority fail to control their mass media that agitates for war, and thereby save the world from the threatening calamity of an armed conflict. Moreover, I cannot understand why these responsible leaders, instead of cultivating diplomatic relations between nations, make them more difficult and indeed disturb them by such actions as the recall of ambassadors without any reason. / 40

7. Mr. Roosevelt declares that the independent existence of three nations in Europe and one in Africa has been terminated.

Answer: I do not know which three nations in Europe are meant. Should it refer to the provinces reincorporated in the German Reich, I must draw the attention of Mr. Roosevelt to a mistake on his part about history.

These nations have not now sacrificed their independent existence in Europe, but rather in 1918. At that time, in violation of solemn promises, their logical ties were torn asunder and they were made into “nations” that they never wished to be and never had been. They were forced into an independence that was no independence, but at most could only mean dependence upon an international foreign world that they detested. / 41

Moreover, with regard to the assertion that one nation in Africa has lost its freedom – that, too, is a mistake. It is not a question of *one* nation in Africa having lost its freedom. / 42 On the contrary, nearly all the original inhabitants of that continent have lost their freedom through being made subject to the sovereignty of other nations by bloodshed and force. Moroccans, Berbers, Arabs, Negroes, and so forth, have all fallen victim to the swords of foreign might, which, however, were not marked “Made in Germany” but “Made by Democracies.”

8. Mr. Roosevelt then speaks of reports, which he admittedly does not believe to be correct, but which state that still further acts of aggression are contemplated against other independent nations.

Answer: I consider every such unfounded insinuation as an attempt against the tranquility and peace of the world. I also see in them an effort calculated to alarm smaller nations, or at least to put them on

edge. In that regard, if Mr. Roosevelt really has any specific instances in mind, I would ask him to name the states that are threatened with aggression and to name the aggressor in question. It will then be a simple matter to quickly refute these preposterous general charges.

9. Mr. Roosevelt states that the world is plainly moving towards the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a rational way of guiding events is found. He also declares that I have repeatedly asserted that I and the German people have no desire for war, and that if that is true there need be no war.

My Answer: I would like to once again point out, first of all, that I have not waged any war, and, secondly, that for years I have expressed my abhorrence of war and, no less, of agitation for war, and, thirdly, that I do not know for what purpose I would wage a war at all. I would appreciate it if Mr. Roosevelt would provide an explanation in this regard.

10. Mr. Roosevelt is further of the opinion that the peoples of the world cannot be persuaded that any governing power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people, except in the cause of self-evident home defense.

Answer: I should think that every reasonable human being is of this opinion, but it seems to me that in almost every war both sides claim that theirs is a case of unquestionable home defense. I do not believe there is an authority in this world, including President Roosevelt himself, who could decide this question unequivocally.

There is hardly any doubt, for example, that America's entry into the [First] World War was not a case of "self-evident home defense." / 43 To the contrary, an investigative committee supported by President Roosevelt himself examined the causes of America's entry into the World War, and concluded that the entry came about chiefly for reasons that were exclusively capitalistic. / 44 Nevertheless, no practical conclusions have been drawn from that.

Let us hope, then, that at least the United States will in the future act according to this noble principle itself, and will not go to war against any country except in the cause of indisputable self-defense.

11. Mr. Roosevelt says further that he does not speak from selfishness, weakness or fear, but with the voice of strength and friendship for mankind.

Answer: If this voice of strength and friendship for mankind had been raised by America at the proper time, and particularly if it had had any practical value, then at least that treaty which was to become the source of the greatest disruption of humanity in history, the Dictate of Versailles, could have been prevented.

12. Mr. Roosevelt declares further that it is clear to him that all international problems can be solved at the conference table.

My answer: Theoretically one ought to believe in this possibility, for common sense would in many cases easily determine the justice of demands, on the one side, and the compelling need for accommodation, on the other.

For example: on the basis of common sense and the general principles of a higher human justice, indeed, according to the laws of a divine will, all peoples ought to all have an equal share of the world's goods. It ought not then to happen that one people needs so much space to live in that it cannot get along with 15 inhabitants to the square kilometer, while others are forced to sustain 140, 150 or even 200 on the same area. But in any event these fortunate peoples should not curtail the existing space allotted to those who are already suffering, by robbing them of their colonies for instance. I would therefore be more than happy if these problems could really find their solution at the conference table.

My skepticism, however, is based on the fact that it was America herself that gave the sharpest expression of her distrust with regard to the effectiveness of conferences. For the greatest conference of all time was without doubt the League of Nations. This authoritative body, representing all the peoples of the world, and created in accordance with the intentions of an American President, was supposed to solve the problems of humanity at the conference table. / 45 The first state, however, that shrank from this endeavor was the United States – the reason being that President Wilson himself even then had the greatest doubts about the possibility of really being able to solve decisive international problems at such a conference table.



We honor your well-meant expression of opinion, Mr. Roosevelt, but contrary to your opinion stands the actual fact that in almost twenty years of the activity of the greatest conference in the world, the League of Nations, it has proven impossible to solve even a single really decisive international problem.

Contrary to [President] Wilson's promise, Germany was prevented for many years by the Peace Treaty of Versailles from participating in this great world conference. In spite of the most bitter experience there was one German government that believed that there was no need to follow the example of the United States, and that it should therefore take a seat at this conference table. / 46

It was not until after years of pointless participation that I resolved to follow the example of America and likewise leave the largest conference in the world. Since then I have solved my people's problems, which, like all others, were, unfortunately not solved at the conference table of the League of Nations – and I solved them without recourse to war in even a single instance. Apart from that, however, and as already mentioned, numerous other problems have been brought before world conferences in recent years without any solution having been found.

If, however, Mr. Roosevelt, your belief that every problem can be solved at the conference table is true, then all nations, including the United States, have been led over the past seven or eight hundred years either by blind men or by criminals.

For no statesmen, including those of the United States and especially her greatest, / 47 significantly shaped history at the conference table, but rather through applying the strength of his nation's people. The freedom of North America was not achieved at the conference table any more than was the conflict between the Northern and Southern states decided there. I will not mention the innumerable conflicts that finally led to the subjugation of the North American continent as a whole. I cite all this only to point out that your view, Mr. Roosevelt, although undoubtedly deserving of all respect, is not confirmed by the history either of your own country or of the rest of the world.

13. Mr. Roosevelt also states that it is no answer to the appeal for peaceful discussion for one side to assert that, unless they receive assurances beforehand that the outcome will be theirs, they will not set aside their arms.

My answer: Do you believe, Mr. Roosevelt, that if the ultimate fate of nations is in the balance, a government or the leaders of a people will lay down their arms or surrender them before a conference, simply in the blind hope that the other members of the conference will be wise enough, or clear-sighted enough, to reach the right decision?

Mr. Roosevelt, there has been only one country and one government that has acted in accordance with the recipe you extol in such glowing terms: Germany. The German nation, trusting the solemn assurances of the American President Wilson, and in the confirmation of those assurances by the Allies, once laid down its weapons and went unarmed to the conference table. However, as soon as the German nation laid down its arms, there was no question of an invitation to a conference table, but rather, and in violation of the assurances, it was made the victim of the worst breach of a promise ever known. Instead of the greatest discord known to history being repaired around the conference table, the result was the world's most cruelly dictated treaty, which brought about even more terrible discord.

But the representatives of the German nation, who had laid down their arms, trusting in the solemn assurances of an American President, and who thus came unarmed, were not received, even though they had come to accept the terms of the dictated treaty. After all, they were the representatives of a nation that for four years had held out with immeasurable heroism against a whole world in the struggle for its freedom and independence.

They were treated degradingly, similar to treatment that might have been accorded to chiefs of Sioux tribes. The German delegates were insulted by the mob, stones were thrown at them, and they were taken like prisoners, not to the conference table of the world, but rather before the tribunal of the victors; and there, at pistol point, were forced to accept the most shameful subjection and plundering in history.

I can assure you, Mr. Roosevelt, that I am steadfastly determined to see to it that not only now, but for all time to come, no German shall ever again enter a conference defenseless, but that now and forever every representative of Germany must and shall have behind him the united strength of the German nation, so help me God.

14. Mr. Roosevelt believes that in a conference room, as in a court, both sides must enter in good faith, with the assumption that justice will in fact be rendered to both sides.

Answer: German representatives will never again enter a conference that for them is a tribunal. For who is to be the judge there? At a conference there is no accused and no prosecutor, but two contending parties. If their own good sense does not bring about a settlement between the two parties, they will never surrender themselves to the verdict of other powers whose interests are wholly foreign to theirs.

Incidentally, the United States itself declined to enter the League of Nations and to become the victim of a court that was able, merely by a majority vote, to hand down a decision contrary to the interests of one side or the other. I would be grateful if Mr. Roosevelt would explain just how the new World Court is to be organized. Who would be the judges? According to what procedure would they be selected? On what responsibility would they act? And above all, to what authority could they held accountable?

15. Mr. Roosevelt believes that the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to give a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of their governments.

Answer: I have already done this, Mr. Roosevelt, in countless public speeches. And in the course of this session of the German Reichstag, I have again – as far as that's possible in the space of two hours – made a statement of this kind.

I must, however, decline to give such an explanation to anyone other than to the people for whose existence and life I am responsible, and who, in their turn, alone have the right to demand that I account to them. In any case, I explain Germany's policy publicly, so that the entire world can also hear it. But these explanations are without significance for the outside world as long as it is possible for the press to falsify and cast suspicion on every statement, to call them into question, or to drown them with new lies.

16. Mr. Roosevelt believes that, because the United States, as one of the nations of the Western Hemisphere, is not directly involved in the controversies that have arisen in Europe, I should therefore be willing to make such a statement of policy to him. as the head of a nation so far removed from Europe.

Answer: Mr. Roosevelt therefore seriously believes that the cause of international peace would really be furthered if the nations of the world were to make public statements on the current policies of their governments. But how is it that President Roosevelt was moved to single out the German head of state to make a statement, without inviting the other governments to make such a statement of their policy?

I believe that it is not appropriate to make such a statement to the head of any foreign state, but rather that such statements should be made preferably to the entire world, in accordance with President Wilson's proposal for the abolition of secret diplomacy. / 48 Not only I have always been prepared to do that, but, as I have already said, I have quite often done so. Unfortunately, it has been precisely the most important statements concerning the aims and intentions of German policy that, in many so-called democratic states, have either been withheld from the people or have been distorted by the press.

If however, President Roosevelt believes that he is called upon to address such a request specifically to Germany or Italy because America is so far removed from Europe, we for our part could, by the same right, address to the President of the American Republic a query regarding the goals of American foreign policy, and the aims on which this policy is based – with regard, for example, to the countries of Central and South America. In such a case, Mr. Roosevelt would most likely refer to the Monroe Doctrine, and reject such a request as an interference in the internal affairs of the American continent. / 49 We Germans support a similar doctrine for Europe – and, above all, for the territory and interests of the Greater German Reich. In any case, I would of course never presume to address such a challenge to the President of the United States of America, because I assume that such presumptuousness would rightly be considered tactless.

17. Mr. Roosevelt further declares that he would then communicate information received by him concerning the political aims of Germany to other nations that are now apprehensive regarding the course of our policy.

Answer: How has Mr. Roosevelt determined which nations consider themselves threatened by German policy, and which do not? Or is Mr. Roosevelt in a position, with the enormous amount of work that certainly he must have to handle in his own country, to recognize all the inner-most thoughts and feelings of other nations and their governments?

18. Finally, Mr. Roosevelt asks that assurances be given him that the German armed forces will not attack, and above all, will not invade, the territory or possessions of the following independent nations. He then names those to which he refers: Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iraq, Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran.

My answer: I have taken the trouble to ascertain from the states mentioned, firstly, whether they feel themselves threatened, and, what is more important, secondly, whether this inquiry of Mr. Roosevelt was addressed to us at their suggestion, or at least with their consent.

The reply was in all cases negative, in some instances strongly so. It is true that among the states and nations mentioned there were some to which these inquiries could not be made – Syria, for example – because they are at present not in possession of their freedom, but are held under occupation by the military forces of democratic states, and consequently are deprived of their rights.

Apart from this fact, however, all states bordering on Germany have received much more binding assurances and, more importantly, more binding proposals than Mr. Roosevelt asked from me in his curious telegram.

Should there be any doubt as to the value of those general and specific statements which I have so often made, then any further statement of that kind, even if addressed to Mr. Roosevelt, would be equally worthless. For in the final analysis it is not the value that Mr. Roosevelt gives to such statements which is decisive, but the value given to such statements by the countries in question.

But I must also draw Mr. Roosevelt's attention to one or two mistakes in history. He mentions Ireland, for instance, and asks for a statement to the effect that Germany will not attack Ireland. Now, I have just read a speech given by the Irish prime minister, de Valera, in which oddly enough, and contrary to Mr. Roosevelt's opinion, he does not charge Germany with oppressing Ireland, but reproaches Britain with subjecting Ireland to continuous aggression. / 50

With all due respect to Mr. Roosevelt's insight into the needs and cares of other countries, it may nevertheless be assumed that the Irish prime minister would certainly be more familiar with the dangers that threaten his country than would the President of the American Republic.

Similarly the fact has obviously escaped Mr. Roosevelt's notice that Palestine is at present occupied not by German troops but by the British; and that the country's freedom is being restricted by the most brutal use of force, is being robbed of its independence, and is suffering the cruellest mistreatment for the benefit of Jewish interlopers. The Arabs living in that country would therefore certainly not have complained to Mr. Roosevelt of German aggression, but they are voicing a constant appeal to the world, deploring the barbarous methods with which Britain is attempting to suppress a people that loves its freedom and is merely trying to defend it.

This, too, is perhaps a problem that in Mr. Roosevelt's view should be solved at the conference table, that is, before a fair judge, and not by brutal force, military methods, mass executions, burning down villages, blowing up houses, and so on. For one fact is surely certain. In this case Britain is not defending herself against a threatened Arab attack, but as an uninvited interloper is endeavoring to establish her power in a foreign territory that does not belong to her. / 51

A number of similar errors made by Mr. Roosevelt could be pointed out, quite aside from the difficulty of military operations on the part of Germany in states and countries, some of which are two or five thousand kilometers away from us.

Finally, I want to state the following:

The German government is, in spite of everything, prepared to give to each of the states named an assurance of the kind desired by Mr. Roosevelt, on condition of absolute reciprocity, provided that such state wishes it, and itself addresses to Germany a request for such an assurance, together with correspondingly acceptable proposals.

In the case of a number of the states mentioned by Mr. Roosevelt, this question can probably be regarded as already settled, because we are already either allied with them or at least united by close ties of friendship. As for the duration of these agreements, Germany is happily willing to reach agreement with each individual state in accord with its wishes.

But I don't want to let this opportunity pass without above all giving to the President of the United States an assurance regarding those territories that, after all, would give him most cause for apprehension, namely the United States itself and the other states of the American continent.

And I here solemnly declare that all the assertions that have in any way been circulated about an intended German attack against or intervention in American territory are rank frauds or gross falsehoods, quite apart from the fact that such assertions, from a military perspective, could only be the product of silly fantasy. / 52

19. Mr. Roosevelt then goes on to declare in this connection that he regards the discussion of the most effective and immediate manner in which the peoples of the world can obtain relief from the crushing burden of armaments, as the most important issue of all.

Answer: Mr. Roosevelt perhaps does not know that this problem, in so far as it concerns Germany, was once already completely solved. Between 1919 and 1923 the German Reich had already fully disarmed, as the Allied commissions expressly confirmed. This was the extent of the disarmament:

The following military equipment was destroyed:

59,000 artillery pieces,

130,000 machine guns,  
31,000 trench-mortars  
6,000,000 rifles and carbines,  
243,000 machine gun barrels,

28,000 gun carriages,

4,390 mortar carriages,

38,750,000 shells,

16,550,000 hand and rifle grenades,  
60,400,000 rounds of live ammunition,  
491,000,000 rounds of small caliber ammunition,  
335,000 metric tons shell jackets,  
23,515 metric tons of cartridge cases,  
37,600 metric tons of gunpowder,  
79,000 unfilled rounds of ammunition,  
212,000 telephone sets,

1,072 flame throwers,

And so forth.

There were further destroyed: Sleds, mobile workshops, anti-aircraft carriages, special occasion carriages, steel helmets, gas masks, munitions industry machinery, and rifle barrels.

The following air force equipment was destroyed:

15,714 fighter planes and bombers,  
27,757 airplane engines.

With regard to the navy, the following was destroyed:

26 capital battle ships,  
4 coastal defense vessels,

4 armored cruisers,  
19 small cruisers,  
21 training and other special ships,  
83 torpedo boats,  
315 submarines.

In addition, the following were destroyed: Vehicles of all kinds, poison gas and some anti-gas protective equipment, fuel and explosives, searchlights, gun sights, range finders, distance- and sound-measuring devices, optical instruments of all kinds, harnesses and saddles, and so forth; all military air facilities and airship hangars, and so forth.

According to the solemn pledges given at one time to Germany, pledges that were even confirmed in the Peace Treaty of Versailles, all that was supposed to be an advance measure that would then make it possible for the rest of the world to likewise disarm without danger. / 53

In this case, as in all others when Germany believed that promises would be kept, it was disgracefully deceived. As is well known, all attempts to induce the other states to disarm, pursued in negotiations at the conference table over many years, came to nothing. That disarmament would have been sensible and just, and furthermore would have fulfilled pledges already made.

I myself, Mr. Roosevelt, have made a number of practical proposals for discussion, and in addition have tried to initiate discussions to at least make possible a general limitation of armaments at the lowest possible level. / 54

I proposed a maximum strength of 200,000 men for all armies, as well as the abolition of all weapons of offense, of bombing planes, of poison gas, and so forth and so on. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to make headway on these proposals with the rest of the world, even though Germany herself was at the time completely disarmed.

I then proposed that armies have a maximum strength of 300,000 men. That proposal met with the same negative result. I then made a number of detailed proposals for disarmament, in each case before the German Reichstag and thereby to the entire world. It never occurred to anyone even to mention them. Instead, the rest of the world began still further increases in their already enormous armaments.

It was only in 1934, after the rejection of the last of my wide-ranging German proposals that armies be restricted to no more than 300,000 men, that I gave the order for German rearmament, and this time on a comprehensive scale. Nevertheless, I do not want to be an obstacle to any disarmament discussions in which you, Mr. Roosevelt, intend to participate. I would ask you, however, not to appeal first to me and Germany but rather to the others. I have the benefit of actual experience behind me, and therefore will tend to be skeptical until reality teaches me otherwise.

20. Mr. Roosevelt assures us further that he is prepared to take part in discussions to consider the most practical way of opening avenues of international trade with the goal of enabling every nation of the world to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market, as well as to be assured of access to raw materials and the products of peaceful economic life.

Answer: It is my belief, Mr. Roosevelt, that it is not so much a question of discussing these problems theoretically as of removing with deeds the real barriers that exist in international trade. / 55 The worst barriers, however, lie with the individual states themselves.

Experience shows, at any rate thus far, that the most important world economic conferences have failed simply because the various countries have been unable to maintain order in their internal economic systems; or else because they brought uncertainty into the international financial market through currency manipulations, and especially by causing continual fluctuations in the value of their currencies in relation to one another.

It is likewise an intolerable burden for world economic relations that it should be possible in some countries, for one ideological reason or another, to let loose a wild boycott agitation against other countries and their goods, and thereby to practically eliminate them from the market. / 56

It is my belief, Mr. Roosevelt, that it would be most commendable on your part, if you, with your great influence, would begin in the United States with the removal of these barriers to a genuinely free world trade. For it is my conviction that if the leaders of nations are not even able to bring order to production in their own countries, or of removing boycotts organized for ideological reasons, which



can do so much damage to international trade relations, there is much less prospect of achieving any really fruitful step toward the improvement of economic relations by means of international agreements. There is no other way to secure the equal right of all to buy and sell in the world market.

Further, the German nation has made very concrete proposals in this regard, and I would appreciate it if you, Mr. Roosevelt, as one of the successors of the late President Wilson, would use your efforts to seeing that the promises, on the basis of which Germany once laid down her arms and placed herself in the hands of the so-called victors, will at last be redeemed.

I am thinking less of the countless millions extorted from Germany as so-called reparations than of the return of the territories stolen from Germany. Germany lost approximately three million square kilometers of territory in and outside of Europe, even though the entire German colonial empire, in contrast to the colonies of other nations, was not acquired by means of war but solely through treaties or purchase.

President Wilson solemnly pledged his word that Germany's colonial claims would receive the same just consideration as those of all others. / 57 Instead of that, however, the German possessions were given to nations that already have the largest colonial empires in history, while our people were subjected to great misery, today as well in the future.

It would be a noble act if President Franklin Roosevelt were to redeem the promises made by President Woodrow Wilson. That, above all, would be a practical contribution to the moral consolidation of the world and thereby to improving its economic conditions.

21. Mr. Roosevelt also stated in conclusion that the heads of all the great governments are in this hour responsible for the fate of humanity, and that they cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war. And I, too, would be held accountable for this.

Mr. President! I fully understand that the vastness of your nation and the immense wealth of your country allows you to feel responsible for the fate of the entire world and for the fate of all nations. My sphere, Mr. President, is considerably smaller and more modest. You have 135 million people on nine and half million square kilometers. You have a country with enormous riches, and all natural resources, fertile enough to feed half a billion people, and to provide them with every necessity.

I took on the leadership of a state that was faced with complete ruin thanks to its trust in the promises of the outside world and to the poor governance of its own democratic regime. In this state there are about 140 people per square kilometer – not 15, as in America. The fertility of our country cannot be compared with that of yours. We lack countless natural resources, which nature has bestowed on you in unlimited amounts.

Billions in German savings in gold and foreign exchange that had been accumulated during many years of peace were extorted and taken from us. We lost our colonies. In 1933 I had in my country seven million unemployed, several million part-time workers, millions of impoverished farmers, trade destroyed, and commerce ruined; in short, general chaos.

Since then, Mr. Roosevelt, I have only been able to fully accomplish one single task. I cannot feel myself responsible for the fate of the world, for that world took no interest in the pitiful fate of my own people.

I have regarded myself as called upon by Providence to serve my own people alone, and to deliver them from their awful misery. Thus, for the past six-and-a-half years, I have lived day and night for the single task of awakening the powers of my people in face of our desertion by the rest of the world, of developing these powers to the utmost and of utilizing them for the salvation of our community.

I have conquered chaos in Germany, re-established order, immensely increased production in all fields of our national economy, by strenuous efforts produced substitutes for numerous materials that we lack, prepared the way for new inventions, developed transportation, caused magnificent roads to be built, canals to be dug, and created gigantic new factories. I have striven no less to translate into practice the ideals of the social community, and to promote the education and culture of my people.

I have succeeded in finding useful work once more for all the seven million unemployed, who are so close to our hearts; in keeping the German farmer on his soil in spite of all difficulties, and to save it for him; in causing German commerce to flourish once again; and in promoting transportation to the utmost.

To protect them against the threats of the outside world, I have not only united the German people politically, but have also rearmed them. I have likewise endeavored to rid them of that Treaty, page by page, which in its 448 articles contains the vilest oppression that has ever been inflicted on men and nations.

I have brought back to the Reich the provinces stolen from us in 1919; I have led back to their native country millions of Germans who were torn away from us and were in abject misery; I have reunited the territories that have been German throughout a thousand years of history – and, Mr. Roosevelt, I have endeavored to accomplish all that without bloodshed and without bringing to my people, or to others, the misery of war.

This I have done, Mr. President, through my own efforts, even though 21 years ago, I was an unknown worker and soldier of my people – and can therefore claim a place in history among those men who have done the utmost that can fairly and justly be asked of a single individual.

You, Mr. Roosevelt, have an immeasurably easier task in comparison. You became President of the United States in 1933 when I became Chancellor of the Reich. Thus, from the very outset, you became head of one of the largest and wealthiest countries in the world.

It is your good fortune to have to sustain scarcely 15 people per square kilometer in your country. At your disposal are the most abundant natural resources in the world. Your country is so vast and your fields so fertile, that you can insure for each individual American at least ten times more of the good things of life than is possible in Germany. Nature at least has given you the opportunity to do that.

Although the population of your country is scarcely one-third larger than that of Greater Germany, you have more than fifteen times as much room. And so you have time and leisure – on the same huge scale as you have everything else – to devote your attention to universal problems. Consequently the world is undoubtedly so small for you that you perhaps believe that your intervention can be valuable and effective everywhere. In this way, therefore, your concerns and your initiatives cover a much larger and wider field than mine.

For my world, Mr. President, is the one to which Providence has assigned me, and for which it is my duty to work. Its area is much smaller. It comprises my people alone. But I believe I can thereby best serve that which is in the hearts of all of us – justice, well-being, progress and peace for the entire human community.

## **Endnotes**

1. The Versailles Treaty, signed in France on June 28, 1919 (“The Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany”)

2. Germany’s colonial holdings in 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, comprised a total area of 1,340,000 square miles, with 12 million people. In accord with the Versailles Treaty, all those lands were taken from Germany without compensation. They were turned over to various countries, which were to administer them as “mandates” on behalf of the new League of Nations.

The colonies and the countries to which they were assigned were as follows:

German East Africa, 384,000 square miles. Most of this large area was assigned to Britain, and today is the country of Tanzania. A smaller portion, assigned to Belgium, is today where two countries, Rwanda and Burundi, are located;

German South-West Africa, 322,000 square miles. This was assigned to the Union of South Africa, and today is the country of Namibia; Cameroon, 305,000 square miles. Part of this territory was assigned to France, and part to Britain. Today most of the territory is the country of Cameroon, while a small portion is now part of Nigeria;

Togo, 34,000 square miles. Assigned to France and Britain. The portion of this territory that was assigned to France is today the country of Togo, while a portion that was assigned to Britain is today part of Ghana.

In the Pacific Ocean area: German New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, and the Solomon Islands, 93,000 square miles, were assigned to Australia; Samoa, 1000 square miles, was assigned to New Zealand; The Caroline, Marianne, and Marshall Islands, 1000 square miles, were assigned to Japan. The former German Pacific Ocean possessions are today part of Papua New Guinea, Palau, Nauru, Samoa, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Northern Mariana Islands.

In Asia, Germany's only possession was the Kiautschou Bay concession, 213 square miles, in the Shandong peninsula in China. It included the city of Qingdao (Tsingtao).

3. The "Weimar Republic," 1918-1933.

4. *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), by the British economist John M. Keynes, is the best known and most influential critique of the economic impact of the Versailles Treaty.

5. German Workers Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei), founded Jan. 5, 1919, in Munich. On Feb. 24, 1920, became the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP)

6. Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871.

7. In the aftermath of the First World War, the coal-rich Saar territory was separated from the rest of the German Reich and put under administration of the new League of Nations. In accord with the Versailles Treaty, a plebiscite to determine the region's future was held under League auspices on Jan. 13, 1935. The population voted 90.4 percent to return to Germany. The region accordingly returned to the Reich on March 1, 1935.

8. The Union or "Anschluss" of Austria with the German Reich, March 13, 1938. In Austria, as well as in the rest of the German Reich, approval of the *Anschluss* – as reflected in a national referendum – was nearly unanimous. Even foreign observers acknowledged that the 99 percent "Yes" vote reflected popular sentiment.

9. Founded in Prague in 1348, Charles University is one of the oldest universities in Europe.

10. In 1938 the population of "Czechoslovakia" (sometimes "Czecho-Slovakia") was 14,800,000 million. In this multi-ethnic state, Czechs were largest single group, with about 46 percent of the total population. The 3,200,000 Germans were about 28 percent, outnumbering the two million Slovaks, who were 13 percent. There were also smaller Hungarian, Ruthenian/Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish minorities.

11. *News Chronicle* (London), July 14, 1938. The newspaper quoted French Air Minister Pierre Cot as saying that in the case of any conflict with Germany, Czechoslovakia would serve as "an aerodrome for the landing and taking-off of bombers, from which it would be possible to destroy the most important German industrial centres in a few hours." (Alfred M. de Zayas, *The German Expellees* [St. Martin's Press, 1993], pp. 20-21.)

12. May 21, 1938.

13. Kurt Schuschnigg (1897-1977), was Chancellor of Austria from July 30, 1934, to March 11, 1938.

14. In the 1935 parliamentary election, the Sudeten German Party won 68 percent of the votes of the country's ethnic German population, and became the single largest party in Czechoslovakia's parliament. Support for the Party increased thereafter. In local elections in the Sudetenland region in May and June 1938, the Party garnered between 80 and nearly 100 percent of the vote.

15. Known in Germany as the "Westwall," this extensive defense fortification has often been called the "Siegfried Line" in Britain and the US.

16. Taking part in the Munich "Four Power" Conference, Sept. 29, 1938, were German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, Italian premier Benito Mussolini, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and French premier Edouard Daladier.

17. Ethnically the population of the "Sudetenland" region was overwhelmingly German. After the end of the Second World War, some three million of the region's population was forcibly expelled. The population of the area is now almost entirely Czech.

18. Taking part in the Vienna Conference, Nov. 2, 1938, were the foreign ministers of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany and Italy. At the request of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the German and Italian representatives acted as arbiters in determining the boundary between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, based on ethnographic principles.

19. Until the end of the First World War, the Carpatho-Ukraine region in the east of the Czechoslovak Republic had been part of the Kingdom of Hungary. The population was ethnically Ukrainian or "Ruthenian." With the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the region was reincorporated into Hungary. At the end of the Second World War, the region was annexed by the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Ukraine.

20. On March 14, 1939, the Slovak parliament in Bratislava approved the independence of Slovakia.

21. At the end of the Second World War, some three million Germans were forcibly expelled from the territory of restored Czechoslovakia. The country's Hungarian population was also expelled, and the ethnically Ukrainian eastern region of Carpatho-Ukraine was annexed by the Soviet Union. As a result, the population of Czechoslovakia after 1950 was overwhelmingly Czech and Slovak. After the end of Soviet domination of the country in 1989, separatist feelings grew. In 1992 the two nationalities agreed to a "divorce." On Jan. 1, 1993, "Czechoslovakia" disappeared, and two new countries emerged: the Czech Republic (Czechia) and Slovakia.

22. October 14, 1938

23. The Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia became a Protectorate of the Reich on March 15, 1939.

24. See endnote 18.

25. During the 1920s and 1930s, there was ongoing discord between the Irish and British governments. A particularly contentious issue involved the largely Protestant region of Northern Ireland. The Irish government in Dublin regarded continued British control of that region as an illicit occupation.

26. On September 30, 1938, the day after the Munich Conference, German Chancellor Hitler and British Prime Minister Chamberlain signed and issued a joint statement. It declared:

"We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe. We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus contribute to assure the peace of Europe."

27. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty was signed in London on June 18, 1935. It put into effect a proposal by Germany to limit the strength of the German fleet to 35 percent of that of the British fleet. This agreement abrogated the provision of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles that forbid Germany from any having any significant naval force. It was therefore a clear recognition by the British government that the Treaty of Versailles, or at least that portion of it, was no longer valid or binding. With this 1935 agreement, Britain in effect repudiated and "violated" the Versailles Treaty. Categories of ships and armaments were defined by the 1935 Treaty, which were more specifically specified in a follow-up agreement in London on July 17, 1937. The German Note to the British government of April 28, 1939, declared Germany's intention no longer to maintain the quantitative conditions of the treaty, but also stated that it would continue to observe the qualitative clauses, in order to avoid an international naval armaments race.

28. Speech by Chamberlain in Birmingham, March 17, 1939. In this address, the Prime Minister said that Germany now seemed bent on domination of Europe and was seeking to dominate the world by force. Reliance on German assurances was no longer possible, he also suggested.

Minutes of a British cabinet meeting the next day were more explicit: "The Prime Minister said that up till a week ago we had proceeded on the assumption that we should be able to continue with our policy of getting on to better terms with the Dictator Powers, and that although those powers had aims, those aims were limited ... He had now come definitely to the conclusion that Herr Hitler's attitude made it impossible to continue on the old basis ... No reliance could be placed on any of the

assurances given by the Nazi leaders ... he regarded his speech [in Birmingham of March 17] as a challenge to Germany on the issue whether or not Germany intended to dominate Europe by force. It followed that if Germany took another step in the direction of dominating Europe, she would be accepting the challenge.”

In an address of March 31, 1939, the Prime Minister further pledged that if any military action “threatened Polish independence,” and which Poland “felt obliged to resist” militarily, Britain would “at once lend the Polish government all support in their power.” This meant that Britain’s ability to influence Poland to act prudently had all but vanished, and that however unreasonably Poland might act toward Germany over the Danzig issue, or in any other dispute, and which led to armed conflict, Britain was obliged to go to war on Poland’s side. This pledge was hardened on August 25, 1939, with a formal agreement of mutual assistance.

29. After Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933.

30. See endnote 27.

31. Agreement of March 22, 1939, between Germany and Lithuania on the Memel territory.

32. German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, Jan. 26, 1934.

33. The Danzig “Free City” territory had an area of 731 square miles. Its population in 1939 of about 415,000 was 95 percent German. Danzig was separated from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Details of its status were later defined by the Treaty of Paris, Nov. 9, 1920. The territory was placed under the supervision of the League of Nations, which was represented in Danzig by a High Commissioner. The foreign affairs of the “Free City” were handled by Poland, subject to certain restrictions, and the veto of the High Commissioner. Poland had the use of the port, which – along with the waterways – were managed by a board made up equally of Poles and citizens of Danzig. Poland controlled the railways. After 1933, the Danzig government was controlled by the National Socialist Party. As a result of the 1933 election there, 38 of the 72 seats in the Danzig parliament, the *Volkstag*, were held by National Socialists. By June 1938, the National Socialists held 70 of the 72 seats, with the remaining two seats held by Poles. (Incidentally, the High Commissioner referred to here by Hitler as a diplomat of “extraordinary tact” was Carl J. Burckhardt, who wrote a revealing memoir about his role, *Meine Danziger Mission*.)

With the advance of Soviet forces in late 1944 and early 1945, many fled from the city and the region. At the end of World War II, the remaining Germans were forcibly expelled. Danzig and the surrounding area was incorporated into the new Polish state, and the city has since been known as Gdansk

34. The “Corridor” gave the Polish state access to the Baltic Sea, but also cut off the province of East Prussia from the rest of Germany

35. This is a reference to reports of widespread panic among the American public generated by a radio broadcast on Oct. 30, 1938, of an adaptation of the novel “The War of the Worlds.” The hour-long presentation was directed and narrated by Orson Welles. Many alarmed listeners reportedly believed that hostile space ships from Mars were actually landing and ravaging the United States.

36. Another reference to the panic set off in the US by the Welles’ “War of The Worlds” broadcast. See endnote 35.

37. Among the most prominent and influential of these American scholars were Sidney Bradshaw Fay, Harry Elmer Barnes, Charles Beard, and Charles C. Tansill.

38. This is a reference to a telegram by President Roosevelt to Chancellor Hitler of Sept. 26, 1938. The German leader responded immediately with a lengthy message, to which Roosevelt replied with another telegram, dated Sept. 27, 1938.

39. A useful review of Hitler’s numerous proposals for peace, reductions of armaments, and so forth, is: Friedrich Stieve. *What the World Rejected: Hitler's Peace Offers 1933-1939* (<http://ihr.org/other/what-the-world-rejected.html>)

40. This is a reference to President’s Roosevelt’s recall of the US ambassador from Berlin on Nov. 14, 1938, supposedly “with a view to gaining a first-hand picture of the situation in Germany.” Thereafter, the US had no ambassador-level diplomatic relations in Germany.



41. This is a reference particularly to Austria and Czechoslovakia.

42. This is a reference to Ethiopia. In a military campaign from October 1935 to February 1937, Italian forces took control of the country and incorporated it into "Italian East Africa." During World War II, Allied forces ousted the Italians and restored the Ethiopian "empire."

43. President Wilson called on the US Congress to declare war against Germany on April 2, 1917. In his address to the Congress, he did not claim that the US was going to war to defend the country against German aggression, or to protect vital American interests. Instead, he said that the US would be joining the global conflict to "fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy."

44. The Nye Committee, officially the "Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry," was a U.S. Senate committee (1934-1936), chaired by Senator Gerald Nye. The committee, which President Franklin Roosevelt publicly supported, carried out extensive investigation of the role of American financial, banking, and business interests in the country's involvement in World War I. It documented enormous profits made by American armaments manufacturers during the war. It found that the arms industry wielded major influence on US foreign policy leading up to and during World War I. It found that New York bankers had pressured President Wilson to intervene in the war to protect their loans abroad.

45. President Wilson called for a "general association of nations" as Point 14 of his "Fourteen Points," laid out in an address to a joint session of the US Congress on Jan. 8, 1918. The "Fourteen Points" program was accepted by the British and French governments, and it was on the basis of its solemn assurances that Germany agreed in November 1918 to an armistice. Accordingly, the League of Nations was established as part of the Versailles Treaty.

46. When the League of Nations was established in 1919-20, Germany was not permitted to join. That ban was later dropped, and Germany joined the League in 1926. After Hitler took power, Germany remained a member for some months. He and his government hoped that the other member countries would deal with Germany on a basis of equity and reciprocity. Specifically, Hitler's government called on the League, and especially Britain and France as member states, either to agree to reduce their nation's armaments and military forces, thereby fulfilling earlier pledges, or to permit disarmed Germany to build its own military for national defense. It was only after this request was rejected, and the British and French governments made clear their refusal to treat Germany on an equal basis, that the German government announced, on Oct. 14, 1933, its withdrawal from the League.

47. An apparent reference to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

48. Point 1 of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points."

49. According to the "Monroe Doctrine," which has long been an important feature of US foreign policy, the United States opposes any interference by any European power in the affairs of any country in the Western hemisphere. During the late 1900s and the first decades of the 20th century, the United States cited the Monroe Doctrine to also justify US hegemony and outright military intervention in the Caribbean, Central America, and northern South America, all of which was regarded as American "sphere of influence."

50. See endnote 25.

51. Before World War I, the land known as Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1916 British and French officials worked out the "Sykes Picot" agreement whereby those two imperial powers would divide up the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire. In accord with that secret treaty, Britain took control of Palestine at the end of the war, and remained in control until 1948.

52. During this period, much of the American media, including major newspapers, magazines, radio commentators, and newsreel companies, carried out a well-organized campaign portraying Hitler's Germany as an evil, oppressive state that posed a grave threat to America and the world, and its leader as a madman driven by lust for war and destruction. For example, several months before Hitler's speech, the country's most influential illustrated weekly, *Life* magazine (Oct. 31, 1938), published a major article headlined "America Gets Ready to Fight Germany, Italy, Japan." Readers were told that Germany and Italy "covet ... the rich resources of South America," and warned that "fascist fleets and legions may swarm across the Atlantic."

53. The governments of France, Britain and other countries that endorsed Wilson's "Fourteen Points" promised: "Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with national safety." Similarly, France, Britain and the other nations that signed the Versailles Treaty agreed in that document: "In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval and air clauses which follow."

54. See endnote 39.

55. Point 3 of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points."

56. After Hitler and the National Socialist Party took power, major Jewish organizations in the US and other countries acted quickly to organize an international boycott of German goods, with the goal of crippling the German economy and thereby pressuring the German government to repeal or modify its discriminatory measures against Jews, and perhaps encouraging "regime change" in Germany. In New York City, a series of Jewish-organized rallies drew large crowds and support from prominent non-Jews. Newspapers in the US, Britain and other countries made clear the scale and earnestness of this ambitious effort. In London, the large-circulation *Daily Express*, for example, reported on the international campaign in a large front-page article headlined "Judea Declares War on Germany." In Germany, the National Socialists responded with a one-day boycott against Jewish businesses. In the following years, the anti-German boycott campaign gained increasing support, not only from Jews, but also from many non-Jews who disliked or opposed National Socialist Germany. In the US, Jewish groups pressed this campaign until December 1941, when the US and Germany officially went to war.

57. Point 5 of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points."

### For Further Reading

Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994

Nicholson Baker, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008

Harry Elmer Barnes, ed., *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. Institute for Historical Review, 1993

Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*. Yale University, 1948.

Patrick J. Buchanan, *Churchill, Hitler and 'The Unnecessary War': How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World*. New York: Crown, 2008

William H. Chamberlin, *America's Second Crusade*. Chicago: 1950.

John Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace*. Chicago: 1990

Benjamin Colby, *'Twas a Famous Victory*. New Rochelle: 1979.

Norman Davies, *No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939-1945*. New York: Viking, 2007

Hamilton Fish, *Tragic Deception: FDR and America's Involvement in World War II*. Devin-Adair, 1983. Esp. page 80.

Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: Franklin Roosevelt and the War Within World War II*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

J. F. C. Fuller, *A Military History of the Western World*. New York: 1987. Vol. 3, esp. pp. 372-375, 411-419.

Germany, Auswärtiges Amt [German Foreign Office]. *Documents on the Events Preceding the Outbreak of the War*. New York: 1940.

Robert Higgs, "Truncating the Antecedents: How Americans Have Been Misled About World War II." March 18, 2008

( <http://www.lewrockwell.com/higgs/higgs77.html> )

Adolf Hitler. Reichstag speech of Dec. 11, 1941. (Declaration of war against the USA)  
( [http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v08/v08p389\\_Hitler.html](http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v08/v08p389_Hitler.html) )

David L. Hoggan, *The Forced War: When Peaceful Revision Failed*. IHR, 1989.

David L. Hoggan, "President Roosevelt and The Origins of the 1939 War." *The Journal of Historical Review*, Summer 1983.  
( [http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v04/v04p205\\_Hoggan.html](http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v04/v04p205_Hoggan.html) )

Herbert C. Hoover, *Freedom Betrayed: Herbert Hoover's Secret History of the Second World War and its Aftermath* (George H. Nash, ed.). Stanford Univ., 2011.

Joseph P. Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939-1941*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976.

Bruce M. Russett, *No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the U.S. Entry into World War II*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972

Friedrich Stieve. *What the World Rejected: Hitler's Peace Offers 1933-1939*  
( <http://ihr.org/other/what-the-world-rejected.html> )

Michel Sturdza, *The Suicide of Europe*. Boston: 1968

Charles C. Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941*. Chicago: 1952

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*. Chicago: 1976

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*. New York: 1983.

Studs Terkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two*. New York: Pantheon, 1984

John Toland, *Adolf Hitler*. Doubleday & Co., 1976.

F.J.P. Veale, *Advance to Barbarism*. Institute for Historical Review, 1993

Mark Weber, "Collusion: Franklin Roosevelt, British Intelligence, and the Secret Campaign to Push the US into War." February 2020  
( <http://ihr.org/other/RooseveltBritishCollusion> )

Mark Weber, "The 'Good War' Myth of World War Two." May 2008.  
( [http://www.ihr.org/news/weber\\_ww2\\_may08.html](http://www.ihr.org/news/weber_ww2_may08.html) )

Mark Weber, "How Hitler Tackled Unemployment and Revived Germany's Economy." Nov. 2011, Feb. 2012  
( <http://www.ihr.org/other/economyhitler2011.html> )

Mark Weber, "President Roosevelt's Campaign to Incite War in Europe: The Secret Polish Documents," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Summer 1983  
( [http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v04/v04p135\\_Weber.html](http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v04/v04p135_Weber.html) )

Alfred M. de Zayas, *The German Expellees: Victims in War and Peace*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993

Alfred M. de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans from the East*. University of Nebraska, 1989

HOME	SEARCH	CONTACT	DONATE	STORE
------	--------	---------	--------	-------

